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VOLUME 11, No. 5 NOVEMBER

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(*Illustrating "The Door Into Summer"*)

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER *Anthony Boucher*, EDITOR

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Even if you were so unfortunate as to miss the first installment of Robert A. Heinlein's new novel, you can start right in here. For Mr. Heinlein has provided, not a drab synopsis, but a lively narrative introduction to pull you straight into his story — and into his fascinatingly detailed creation of a probable world of 2000 A.D.

The Door Into Summer

by ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

(Second of Three Parts)

My old man named me DANIEL BOONE DAVIS *and taught me to prize personal freedom. In November 1970 I was on top of the world — president, chief engineer, and controlling stockholder of* HIRED GIRL, INC., *the household automation firm; I was engaged to my beautiful secretary* BELLE DARKIN; *my partner was my wartime buddy* MILES GENTRY, *lawyer and business manager of Hired Girl. Our first two household robot servants, Hired Girl and Window Willie, were making us money and I had just finished the prototype of Flexible Frank, the household automaton who could do anything.*

On December 3, 1970 I was a sorry mess. All that I had left was some dirty old money, a cumulative hangover, and one battle-scarred tomcat, Petronius the Arbiter, called PETE. *My friend and my sweetheart had ganged up on me to kick me out of my business, steal from me my new invention, and tie me up with a faked yellow-dog contract to keep me from competing with them. I had quarreled with Miles over expanding the business (I was against it) and with Belle over Pete (she despised cats); they had used stock that I had assigned to Belle as an engagement present plus the circumstance that they handled all the firm's paperwork to rig things to hogtie me professionally and lock me out of Hired Girl, Inc. But they were too smart to bankrupt me; I got "severance pay" and a "bonus" and they let me keep a minority holding of stock — it would be impossible to prove in court that I had been cheated.*

My cat Pete used to look for "the door into summer," being convinced that

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if he made me open all the doors, at least one of them must open into good weather. Now I was looking for the door into summer . . . and I had decided that it must lie in cold-sleep.

1970 was the year that the insurance companies really started booming the idea of suspended animation — "Work While You Sleep" — and let your money accumulate . . . wake up a generation later, rich and still young.

I arranged cold-sleep for both Pete and me with the Mutual Assurance Company — I wanted to wake up still young and go count the wrinkles on Belle's haggard face. But the insurance company's examining physician gave me some shot that sobered me up; I decided to go out and have a showdown with Miles first; I phoned him, climbed in my car, and headed for his house.

But I decided first to safeguard my remaining shares of Hired Girl stock . . . not easy; I had no place to send them, no one whom I trusted. Then I thought of RICKY. *Frederica Virginia Gentry was Miles's eleven-year-old stepdaughter; Ricky was as close to Pete as I was and the one person left in the world whom I could trust. By good luck, Ricky was not with Miles; she was at Girl Scout camp; I decided to stop on the way to Miles's house and mail the stock certificates to Ricky. Then I elaborated the plan: I would mail her the stock certificates in an enclosed sealed envelope and include an assignment which would cause the Bank of America to hold the stock in trust for her until she was of age. With this sealed envelope I put a note to Ricky telling her that if she did not hear from me for a year, then she was to take the sealed envelope to any branch of the bank and tell them to open it. All this monkey business was intended to insure that Ricky would get my holdings and that her stepfather and Belle would* not *. . . in case something violent and final happened to me. I mailed it and went on to see Miles.*

Both Belle and Miles were there, as well as Pete, who declined to be left out in my car. The showdown was bitter as civil war and in the course of it I got onto the fact that Belle had married Miles even before they had swindled me. I goaded them with it — and Belle stabbed me in the back with a hypodermic. It was the "zombie" drug, the stuff developed for brainwashing; it left me conscious, able to see and hear, but totally without any will of my own.

While I was awake but helpless Belle tried to kill my cat. There followed a glorious battle: neither Belle nor Miles managed to hurt the cat but he clawed them to bloody ribbons, then escaped out the back door. I sat like a vegetable and watched it.

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After they bandaged their wounds they disposed of me. I had had all my papers for commitment to cold-sleep with me; Belle worked them over to leave out the missing cat, to leave out reference to my Hired Girl stock (she was furious to find it missing), and to switch me over to the Master Insurance Company where she had connections and could handle the fact that I was being committed while doped to the eyebrows. Once her forgeries were all worked out they hurried me to Sawtelle Sanctuary and had me put into cold-sleep.

The last thing I remember was feeling very cold and wondering where Pete was.

V

I was complaining to the bartender about the air conditioning—it was turned too high and we were all going to catch cold. "No matter," he assured me. "You won't feel it when you're asleep. Sleep . . . sleep . . . soup of the evening, beautiful sleep." He had Belle's face.

"How about a warm drink then?" I wanted to know. "A Tom and Jerry? Or a hot guttered bum?"

"You're a bum!" the doctor answered. "Sleeping's too good for him; throw the bum out!"

I tried to hook my feet around the brass rail to stop them. But this bar had no brass rail, which seemed funny, and I was flat on my back, which seemed funnier still, unless they had installed bedside service for people with no feet. I didn't have feet, so how could I hook them under a brass rail? No hands, either. "Look, Maw, no hands!" Pete sat on my chest and wailed.

I was back in basic training . . . advanced basic, it must have been, for I was at Camp Hale at one of those silly exercises where they throw snow down your neck to make a man of you. I was having to climb the damnedest biggest mountain in all Colorado and it was all ice and I had no feet. Nevertheless I was carrying the biggest pack anybody ever saw—I remembered that they were trying to find out if G.I.'s could be used instead of pack mules and I had been picked because I was expendable. I wouldn't have made it at all if little Ricky hadn't got behind me and pushed.

The top sergeant turned and he had a face just like Belle's and he was livid with rage. "Come on, you! I can't afford to wait for you. I don't care whether you make it or not . . . but you can't sleep until you get there."

My no-feet wouldn't take me any farther and I fell down in the

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snow and it was icy warm and I did fall asleep, while little Ricky wailed and begged me not to. But I had to sleep.

I woke up in bed with Belle. She was shaking me and saying, "Wake up, Dan! I can't wait thirty years for you; a girl has to think of her future." I tried to get up and hand her the bags of gold I had under the bed but she was gone . . . and anyhow a Hired Girl with her face had picked all the gold up and put it in its tray on top and scurried out of the room. I tried to run after it but I had no feet—no body at all, I discovered. *"I ain't got no body, and nobody cares for me . . ."* The world consisted of top sergeants and work . . . so what difference did it make where you worked or how? I let them put the harness back on me and I went back to climbing that icy mountain. It was all white and beautifully rounded and if I could just climb to the rosy tip they would let me sleep, which was what I needed. But I never made it . . . no hands, no feet, no nothing.

There was a forest fire on the mountain. The snow did not melt but I could feel the heat in waves, beating against me while I kept struggling. The top sergeant was leaning over me and saying, "Wake up . . . *wake up* . . . WAKE UP."

He no more than got me awake before he wanted me to sleep again. I'm vague about what happened then for a while. Part of the time I was on a table which vibrated under me and there were lights and snaky-looking equipment and lots of people. But when I was fully awake I was in a hospital bed and I felt all right except for that listless, half floating feeling you have after a Turkish bath. I had hands and feet again. But nobody would talk to me and every time I tried to ask a question a nurse would pop something into my mouth. I was massaged quite a lot.

Then one morning I felt fine and got out of bed as soon as I woke up. I felt a little dizzy but that was all. I knew who I was, I knew how I had got there, and I knew that all that other stuff had been dreams.

I knew who had put me there. If Belle had given me orders while I was drugged to forget her shenanigans, either the orders had not taken or thirty years of cold sleep had washed out the hypnotic effect. I was blurry about some details but I knew how they had shanghaied me.

I wasn't especially angry about it. True, it had happened just "yesterday" since yesterday is the day just one sleep behind you—but the sleep had been thirty years long. The feeling cannot be precisely defined, since it is entirely subjective, but, while my memory was sharp for the events of "yesterday," nevertheless my feelings about those events were to things far away.

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You have seen double images in television of a pitcher making his wind up while his picture sits as a ghost on top of a long shot of the whole baseball diamond? Something like that . . . my conscious recollection was a close up; my emotional reaction was to something long ago and far away.

I fully intended to look up Belle and Miles and chop them into cat meat, but there was no hurry. Next year would do—right now I was eager to have a look at the year 2000.

But speaking of cat meat, where was Pete? He ought to be around somewhere . . . unless the poor little beggar hadn't lived through the Sleep.

Then—and not until then—did I remember that my careful plans to bring Pete along had been wrecked.

I took Belle and Miles out of the HOLD basket and moved them over to URGENT. Try to kill my cat, would they?

They had done worse than kill Pete; they had turned him out to go wild . . . to wear out his days wandering back alleys in search of scraps, while his ribs grew thin and his sweet, pixie nature warped into distrust of all two-legged beasts.

They had let him die—for he was surely dead by now—let him die thinking that *I* had deserted him.

For this they would pay . . . if they were still alive. Oh, how I hoped they were still alive—*unspeakable!*

I found that I was standing by the foot of my bed, grasping the rail to steady myself, and dressed only in pajamas. I looked around for some way to call someone. Hospital rooms had not changed much. There was no window and I could not see where the light came from; the bed was high and narrow, as hospital beds had always been in my recollection, but it showed signs of having been engineered into something more than a place to sleep—among other things it seemed to have some sort of plumbing under it which I suspected was a mechanized bed pan, and the side table was part of the bed structure itself. But, while I ordinarily would have been intensely interested in such gadgetry, right now I simply wanted to find the pear-shaped switch which summons the nurse—I wanted my clothes.

It was missing but I found what it had been transformed into: a pressure switch on the side of the table that was not quite a table. My hand struck it in trying to find it and a transparency opposite where my head would have been had I been in bed shone out with: SERVICE CALL. Almost immediately it blanked out and was replaced with: ONE MOMENT, PLEASE.

Very quickly the door silently

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rolled aside and a nurse came in. Nurses had not changed much. This one was reasonably cute, had the familiar firm manners of a drill sergeant, wore a perky little white hat perched on short orchid-colored hair, and was dressed in a white uniform. It was strangely cut and covered her here and uncovered her there in a fashion different from 1970—but women's clothes, even work uniforms, were always doing that. She would still have been a nurse in any year, just by her unmistakable manner.

"You get back in that bed!"

"Where are my clothes?"

"Get back in that bed. Now!"

I answered reasonably, "Look, nurse, I'm a free citizen, over twenty-one, and not a criminal. I don't have to get back into that bed and I'm not going to. Now are you going to show me where my clothes are, or shall I go out the way I am and start looking?"

She looked at me, then turned suddenly and went out; the door ducked out of her way.

But it would not duck out of my way. I was still trying to study out the gimmick, being fairly sure that if one engineer could dream it up, another could figure it out, when it opened again and a man came in.

"Good morning," he said. "I'm Dr. Albrecht."

His clothes looked like a cross between a Harlem Sunday and a picnic to me, but his brisk manner and his tired eyes were convincingly professional; I believed him. "Good morning, doctor. I'd like to have my clothes."

He stepped just far enough inside to let the door slide into place behind him, then reached inside his clothes and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. He got one out, waved it briskly in the air, placed it in his mouth and puffed on it; it was lighted. He offered me the pack. "Have one?"

"Uh, no, thanks."

"Go ahead. It won't hurt you."

I shook my head. I had always worked with a cigarette smoldering beside me; the progress of a job could be judged by the overflowing ashtrays and the burns on the drafting board. Now I felt a little faint at the sight of smoke and wondered if I had dropped the nicotine habit somewhere in the slept-away years. "Thanks just the same."

"OK. Mr. Davis, I've been here six years. I'm a specialist in hypnology, resuscitation, and like subjects. Here and elsewhere I've helped eight thousand and seventy-three patients make the come-back from hypothermia to normal life—you're number eight thousand seventy-four. I've seen them do all sorts of odd things when they came out—odd to laymen; not to me. Some of them want to go right back to sleep again and scream at me when I try to keep them awake. Some of them *do* go back to sleep

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and we have to ship them off to another sort of institution. Some of them start weeping endlessly when they realize that it is a one-way ticket and it's too late to go home to whatever year they started from. And some of them, like you, demand their clothes and want to run out into the street."

"Well? Why not? Am I a prisoner?"

"No. You can have your clothes. I imagine you'll find them out of style, but that is your problem. However, while I send for them, would you mind telling me what it is that is so terribly urgent that you must attend to it right this minute . . . after it has waited thirty years? That's how long you've been at subtemperature—thirty years. Is it really urgent? Or would later today do as well? Or even tomorrow?"

I started to blurt out that it damn well was urgent, then stopped and looked sheepish. "Maybe not that urgent."

"Then as a favor to me, will you get back into bed, let me check you over, have your breakfast, and perhaps talk with me before you go galloping off in all directions? I might even be able to tell you which way to gallop."

"Uh, OK, doctor. Sorry to have caused trouble." I climbed into bed. It felt good—I was suddenly tired and shaky.

"No trouble. You should see some that we get. We have to pull them down off the ceiling." He straightened the covers around my shoulders, then leaned over the table built into the bed. "Dr. Albrecht in seventeen. Send a room orderly with breakfast, uh . . . menu four-minus."

He turned to me and said, "Roll over and pull up your jacket; I want to get at your ribs. While I'm checking you, you can ask questions. If you want to."

I tried to think while he prodded my ribs. I suppose it was a stethoscope he used although it looked like a miniaturized hearing aid. But they had not improved one thing about it; the pick-up he pushed against me was as cold and hard as ever.

What do you ask after thirty years? Have they reached the stars yet? Who's cooking up "The War to End War" this time? Do babies come out of test tubes? "Doc, do they still have popcorn machines in the lobbies of movie theaters?"

"They did the last time I looked. I don't get much time for such things. By the way, the word is *grabbie* now, not *movie*."

"So? Why?"

"Try one. You'll find out. But be sure to fasten your seat belt; they null the whole theatre on some shots. See here, Mr. Davis, we're faced with this same problem every day and we've got it down to a routine. We've got adjustment vocabularies for each entrance year, and historical and

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cultural summaries. It's quite necessary, for malorientation can be extreme no matter how much we lackweight the shock."

"Uh, I suppose so."

"Decidedly. Especially in an extreme lapse like yours. Thirty years."

"Is thirty years the maximum?"

"Yes and no. Thirty-five years is the very longest we've had experience with, since the first commercial client was placed in subtemperature in December 1965. You are the longest Sleeper I have revived. But we have clients in here now with contract times up to a century and a half. They should never have accepted you for as long as thirty years; they didn't know enough then. They were taking a great chance with your life. You were lucky."

"Really?"

"Really. Turn over." He went on examining me and added, "But with what we've learned now I'd be willing to prepare a man for a thousand-year jump if there were any way to finance it . . . hold him at the temperature you were at for a year just to check, then crash him to minus two hundred in a millisecond. He'd live. I think. Let's try your reflexes."

That "crash" business didn't sound good to me. Dr. Albrecht went on: "Sit up and cross your knees. You won't find the language problem difficult. Of course I've been careful to talk in 1970 vocabulary—I rather pride myself on being able to talk selectively in the entrance speech of any of my patients; I've made a hypnostudy of it. But you'll be speaking contemporary idiom perfectly in a week; it's really just added vocabulary."

I thought of telling him that at least four times he had used words not used in 1970, or at least not that way, but I decided it wouldn't be polite. "That's all for now," he said presently. "By the way, Mrs. Schultz has been trying to reach you."

"Huh?"

"Don't you know her? She insisted that she was an old friend of yours."

"'Schultz,'" I repeated. "I suppose I've known several Mrs. Schultzes at one time and another, but the only one I can place was my fourth grade teacher. But she'd be dead by now."

"Maybe she took the Sleep. Well, you can accept the message when you feel like it. I'm going to sign a release on you. But if you're smart, you'll stay here for a few days and soak up reorientation. I'll look in on you later. So 'twenty-three, skidoo!' as they used to say in your day. Here comes the orderly with your breakfast."

I decided that he was a better doctor than a linguist. But I stopped thinking about it when I saw the orderly. It rolled in, carefully avoiding Dr. Albrecht, who

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walked straight out, paying no attention to it and making no effort himself to avoid it.

It came over, adjusted the built-in bed table, swung it over me, opened it out, and arranged my breakfast on it. "Shall I pour your coffee?"

"Yes, please." I did not really want it poured, as I would rather have it stay hot until I've finished everything else. But I wanted to see it poured.

For I was in a delighted daze . . . it was Flexible Frank!

Not the jackleg, bread-boarded, jury-rigged first model Miles and Belle had stolen from me, of course not. This one resembled the first Frank the way a turbospeedster resembles the first horseless carriages. But a man knows his own work. I had set the basic pattern and this was the necessary evolution . . . Frank's great grandson, improved, slicked up, made more efficient—but the same blood line.

"Will that be all?"

"Wait a minute."

Apparently I had said the wrong thing, for the automaton reached inside itself and pulled out a stiff plastic sheet and handed it to me. The sheet remained fastened to him by a slim steel chain. I looked at it and found printed on it:

VOICE CODE—Eager Beaver Model XVII-a

IMPORTANT NOTICE!! This service automaton DOES NOT understand human speech. It has no understanding at all, being merely a machine. But for your convenience it has been designed to respond to a list of spoken orders. It will ignore anything else said in its presence, or (if any phrase triggers it incompletely or such that a circuit dilemma is created) it will offer this instruction sheet. Please read it carefully.

Thank you,

ALADDIN AUTOENGINEERING CORPORATION

Manufacturers of EAGER BEAVER, WILLIWAW, DRAFTING DAN, BUILDER BILL, GREEN THUMB, *and* NANNY. *Custom Designers and Consultants in Automation Problems*

"At Your Service!"

The motto appeared on their trademark showing Aladdin rubbing his lamp and a genie appearing.

Below this was a long list of simple orders: STOP, GO, YES, NO, SLOWER, FASTER, COME HERE, FETCH A NURSE, etc. Then there was a shorter list of tasks common in hospitals, such as back rubs, and including some that I had never heard of. The list closed abruptly with the statement: "Routines 87 through 242 may be ordered only by hospital staff members and the order phrases are therefore not listed here."

I had not voice-coded the first Flexible Frank; you had to punch buttons on his control board. It was not because I had not thought

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of it, but because the analyser and telephone exchange for the purpose would have weighed and bulked and cost more than all the rest of Frank, Sr., net. I decided that I would have to learn some new wrinkles in miniaturization and simplification before I would be ready to practice engineering here. But I was anxious to get started on it, as I could see from Eager Beaver that it was going to be more fun than ever—lots of new possibilities. Engineering is the art of the practical and depends more on the total state of the art than it does on the individual engineer. When railroading time comes, you can railroad—but not before. Look at poor Professor Langley, breaking his heart on a flying machine that should have flown—he had put the necessary genius in it—but he was just a few years too early to enjoy the benefit of collateral art he needed and did not have. Or take great Leonardo da Vinci, so far out of his time that his most brilliant concepts were utterly unbuildable.

I was going to have fun here—I mean "now."

I handed back the instruction card, then got out of bed and looked for the data plate. I had halfway expected to see HIRED GIRL, INC. at the bottom of the notice and I wondered if Aladdin was a daughter corporation of the Mannix group. The data plate did not tell me much other than model, serial number, factory, and such but it did list the patents, about forty of them—and the earliest, I was *very* interested to see, was in 1970 . . . almost certainly based on my original model and drawings.

I found a pencil and memo pad on the table and jotted down the number of that first patent, but my interest was purely intellectual. Even if it had been stolen from me (I was sure it had been), it had expired in 1987—unless they had changed the patent laws—and only those granted later than 1983 would still be valid. But I wanted to know.

A light glowed on the automaton and he announced: "I am being called. May I leave?"

"Huh? Sure. Run along." It started to reach for the phrase list; I hastily said, "Go!"

"Thank you. Goodby." It detoured around me.

"Thank *you*."

"You are welcome."

Whoever had dictated the gadget's sound responses had a very pleasant baritone voice.

I got back into bed and ate the breakfast I had let get cold—only it turned out not to be cold. Breakfast four-minus was about enough for a medium-sized bird, but I found that it was enough, even though I had been very hungry. I suppose my stomach had shrunk. It wasn't until I had finished that I remembered that this was the first food I had eaten in a genera-

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tion. I noticed it then because they had included a menu—what I had taken for bacon was listed as "grilled yeast strips, country style."

But, in spite of a thirty-year fast, my mind was not on food; they had sent a newspaper in with breakfast: the Great Los Angeles Times for Wednesday, December 13, 2000.

Newspapers had not changed much, not in format. This one was tabloid size, the paper was glazed instead of rough pulp, and the illustrations were either full color, or black-and-white stereo—I couldn't puzzle out the gimmick on that last. There had been stereo pictures you could look at without a viewer since I was a small child; as a kid I had been fascinated by ones used to advertise frozen foods in the '50s. But those had required fairly thick transparent plastic for a grid of tiny prisms; these were simply on thin paper. Yet they had depth.

I gave it up and looked at the rest of the paper. Eager Beaver had arranged it on a reading rack and for a while it seemed as if the front page was all I was going to read, for I could not find out how to open the durned thing. The sheets seemed to have frozen solid.

Finally I accidentally touched the lower right hand corner of the first sheet; it curled up and out of the way . . . some surface charge phenomenon, triggered at that point. The other pages got neatly out of the way in succession whenever I touched that spot.

At least half of the paper was so familiar as to make me homesick: *"Your Horoscope Today . . . Mayor Dedicates New Reservoir . . . Security Restrictions Undermining Freedom of Press Says NY solon . . . Giants Take Double-Header . . . Unseasonable Warmth Perils Winter Sports . . . Pakistan Warns India"* . . . et cetera ad tedium. This is where I came in.

Some of the other items were new but explained themselves: LUNA SHUTTLE STILL SUSPENDED FOR GEMINIDS—*Twenty-Four Hour Station Suffers Two Punctures, No Casualties;* FOUR WHITES LYNCHED IN CAPETOWN—*UN Action Demanded;* HOST-MOTHERS ORGANIZE FOR HIGHER FEES—*Demand "Amateurs" Be Outlawed;* MISSISSIPPI PLANTER INDICTED UNDER ANTI-ZOMBIE LAW—*His Defense: "Them Boys Hain't Drugged, They're Just Stupid!"*

I was fairly sure that I knew what that last one meant . . . from experience.

But some of the news items missed me completely. The "wogglies" were still spreading and three more French towns had been evacuated; the King was considering ordering the area dusted. King? Oh, well, French politics might turn up anything, but what was this "Poudre Sanitaire" they were considering on the "wogglies"?—whatever they were. Radioactive, maybe? I hoped they picked a dead

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calm day . . . preferably the 30th of February. I had had a radiation overdose myself once, through a mistake by a damfool WAC technician at Sandia. It had not reached the point-of-no-return vomiting stage but I don't recommend a diet of curies.

The Laguna Beach division of the Los Angeles police had been equipped with Leycoils and the division chief warned all Teddies to get out of town. "My men have orders to nark first and subspeck afterwards. This has got to stop!"

I made a mental note to keep clear of Laguna Beach until I found out what the score was. I wasn't sure I wanted to be subspecked, or subspected, even afterwards.

Those are just samples. There were any number of news stories that started out trippingly, then foundered in what was, to me, double talk.

I started to breeze on past the vital statistics when my eye caught some new subheads. There were the old familiar ones of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces, but now there were "commitments" and "withdrawals" as well, listed by sanctuaries. I looked up "Sawtelle Cons. Sanc." and found my own name. It gave me a warm feeling of "belonging."

But the most intensely interesting things in the paper were the ads. One of the personals stuck in my mind:

Attractive still-young widow with yen to travel wishes to meet mature man similarly inclined. Object: two-year marriage contract.

But it was the display advertising that got me.

Hired Girl and her sisters and her cousins and her aunts were all over the place—and they were still using the trademark, a husky girl with a broom, that I had designed originally for our letterhead. I felt a twinge of regret that I had been in such a jumping hurry to get rid of my stock in Hired Girl, Inc.; it looked as if it was worth more than all the rest of my portfolio. No, that was wrong; if I had kept it with me at the time, that pair of thieves would have lifted it and faked an assignment to themselves. As it was Ricky had gotten it—and if it had made Ricky rich, well, that was all right with me.

I made a note to track down Ricky first thing, top priority. She was all that was left to me of the world I had known and she loomed very large in my mind. Dear little Ricky! If she had been ten years older I would never have looked at Belle . . . and wouldn't have got my fingers burned.

Let's see, how old would she be now? Forty—no, forty-one. It was hard to think of Ricky as forty-one. Still, that wouldn't be old in a woman these days—or even those days. From forty feet you frequently couldn't tell forty-one from eighteen.

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If she was rich, I'd let her buy me a drink and we would drink to Pete's dear departed, funny little soul.

And if something had slipped and she was poor, in spite of the stock I had assigned her, then—by damn, I'd marry her! Yes, I would. It didn't matter that she was ten years or so older than I was; in view of my established record for flubbing the dub I needed somebody older to look out for me and tell me no—and Ricky was just the girl who could do it. She had run Miles and Miles's house with serious, little-girl efficiency when she was less than ten; at forty she would be just the same, only mellowed.

I felt really warm and no longer lost in a strange land for the first time since I had awakened. Ricky was the answer to everything.

Then deep inside me I heard a voice: "Look, stupid, you can't marry Ricky, because a girl as sweet as she was going to be would now have been married for at least twenty years. She'll have four kids . . . maybe a son bigger than you are . . . and certainly a husband who won't be amused by you in the role of good old Uncle Danny."

I listened and my jaw sagged. Then I said feebly, "All right, all right—so I've missed the boat again. But I'm still going to look her up. They can't do more than shoot me. And, after all, she's the only other person who really understood Pete."

I turned another page, suddenly very glum at the thought of having lost both Ricky and Pete. After a while I fell asleep over the paper and slept until Eager Beaver or his twin fetched lunch.

While I was asleep I dreamt that Ricky was holding me on her lap and saying, "It's all right, Danny. I found Pete and now we're both here to stay. Isn't that so, Pete?"

"*Yeeeowl*"

The added vocabularies were a cinch; I spent much more time on the historical summaries. Quite a lot can happen in thirty years but why put it down when everybody else knows it better than I do? I wasn't surprised that the Great Asia Republic was crowding us out of the South American trade; that had been in the cards since the Formosan treaty. Nor was I surprised to find India more Balkanized than ever. The notion of England being a province of Canada stopped me for a moment. Which was the tail and which was the dog? I skipped over the panic of '87; gold was a wonderful engineering material for some uses; I could not regard it as a tragedy to find that it was now cheap and no longer a basis for money, no matter how many people lost their shirts in the change-over.

I stopped reading and thought about the things you could do

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with cheap gold, with its high density, good conductivity, extreme ductility . . . and stopped when I realized I would have to read the technical literature first. Shucks, in atomics alone it would be invaluable. The way the stuff could be worked, far better than any other metal, if you could use it in miniaturizing—again I stopped, morally certain that Eager Beaver had had his "head" crammed full of gold. I would just have to get busy and find out what the boys had been doing in the "small back rooms" while I had been away.

The Sawtelle Sanctuary wasn't equipped to let me read up on engineering, so I told Doc Albrecht I was ready to check out. He shrugged, told me I was an idiot, and agreed. But I did stay one more night; I found that I was fagged just from lying back and watching words chase past in a book scanner.

They brought me modern clothes right after breakfast the next morning . . . and I had to have help in dressing. They were not so odd in themselves (although I had never worn cerise trousers with bell bottoms before) but I could not manage the fastenings without coaching. I suppose my grandfather might have had the same trouble with zippers if he had not been led into them gradually. It was the Sticktite closure seams, of course—I thought I was going to have to hire a little boy to help me go to the bathroom before I got it through my head that the pressure-sensitive adhesion was axially polarized.

Then I almost lost my pants when I tried to ease the waistband. No one laughed at me.

Dr. Albrecht asked, "What are you going to do?"

"Me? First I'm going to get a map of the city. Then I'm going to find a place to sleep. Then I'm going to do nothing but professional reading for quite a while . . . maybe a year. Doc, I'm an obsolete engineer. I don't aim to stay that way."

"Mmmm. Well, good luck. Don't hesitate to call if I can help."

I stuck out my hand. "Thanks, Doc. You've been swell. Uh, maybe I shouldn't mention this until I talk to the accounting office of my insurance company and see just how well off I am—but I don't intend to let it go with words. Thanks for the sort of thing you've done for me should be more substantial. Understand me?"

He shook his head. "I appreciate the thought. But my fees are covered by my contract with the Sanctuary."

"But—"

"No. I can't take it, so please let's not discuss it." He shook hands and said, "Goodby. If you'll stay on this slide it will take you to the main offices." He hesitated. "If you find things a bit tiring at

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first, you're entitled to four more days recuperation and reorientation here without additional charge under the custodial contract. It's paid for. Might as well use it. You can come and go as you like."

I grinned. "Thanks, Doc. But you can bet that I won't be back—other than to say hello someday."

I stepped off at the main office and told the receptionist there who I was. It handed me an envelope, which I saw was another phone message from Mrs. Schultz. I still had not called her, because I did not know who she was, and the sanctuary did not permit visits nor phone calls to a revivified client until he wanted to accept them. I simply glanced at it and tucked it in my blouse, while thinking that I might have made a mistake in making Flexible Frank too flexible. Receptionists used to be pretty girls, not machines.

The receptionist said, "Step this way, please. Our treasurer would like to see you."

Well, I wanted to see him, too, so I stepped that way. I was wondering how much money I had made and was congratulating myself on having plunged in common stocks, rather than playing it "safe." No doubt my stocks had dropped in the Panic of '87, but they ought to be back up now—in fact I knew that at least two of them were worth a lot of dough now; I had been reading the financial section of the *Times*. I still had the paper with me, figuring I might want to look up some others.

The treasurer was a human being, even though he looked like a treasurer. He gave me a quick hand shake. "How do you do, Mr. Davis. I'm Mr. Doughty. Sit down, please."

I said, "Howdy, Mr. Doughty. I probably don't need to take that much of your time. Just tell me this: does my insurance company handle its settlements through your office? Or should I go to their home offices?"

"Do please sit down. I have several things to explain to you."

So I sat. His office assistant (good old Frank again) fetched a file folder for him and he said, "These are your original contracts. Would you like to see them?"

I wanted very much to see them, as I had kept my fingers crossed ever since I was fully awake, wondering if Belle had figured out some way to bite the end off that certified check. A certified check is much harder to play hanky-panky with than is a personal check, but Belle was a clever gal.

I was much relieved to see that she had left my commitments unchanged, except of course that the side contract for Pete was missing and also the one concerning my Hired Girl stock. I supposed that she had just burned those, to keep from raising questions. I examined with care the dozen or more places where she had changed. "Mutual

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Assurance Company" to "Master Insurance Company of California."

The gal was a real artist, no question. I suppose a scientific criminologist, armed with microscope and comparison stereo and chemical tests and so forth could have proved that each of those documents had been altered, but I could not. I wondered how she had coped with the closed endorsement on the back of the certified check, since certified checks are always on paper guaranteed nonerasable. Well, she probably had not used an eraser—what one person can dream up another person can outsmart . . . and Belle was *very* smart.

Mr. Doughty cleared his throat. I looked up. "Do we settle my account here?"

"Yes."

"Then I can put it in two words. How much?"

"Mmm . . . Mr. Davis, before we go into that question, I would like to invite your attention to one additional document . . . and to one circumstance. This is the contract between this sanctuary and Master Insurance Company of California for your hypothermia, custody, and revivification. You will note that the entire fee is paid in advance. This is both for our protection and for yours, since it guarantees your safebeing while you are helpless. The funds—all such funds—are placed in escrow with the superior court division handling chancery matters and are paid quarterly to us as earned."

"OK. Sounds like a good arrangement."

"It is. It protects the helpless. Now you must understand clearly that this sanctuary is a separate corporation from your insurance company; the custodial contract with us was a contract entirely separate from the one for the management of your estate."

"Mr. Doughty, what are you getting at?"

"Do you have any assets other than those you entrusted to Master Insurance Company?"

I thought it over. I had owned a car once . . . but God alone knew what had become of it. I had closed out my checking account in Mojave early in the binge, and on that busy day when I ended up at Miles's place—and in the soup—I had started with maybe thirty or forty dollars in cash. Books, clothes, slide rule—I had never been a packrat and that minor junk was gone anyhow. "Not even a bus transfer, Mr. Doughty."

"Then—I am very sorry to have to tell you this—you have no assets of any sort."

I held still while my head circled the field and came in for a crash landing. "What do you mean? Why, some of the stocks I invested in are in fine shape. I *know* they are. It says so right here." I held up my breakfast copy of the *Times*.

He shook his head. "I'm sorry,

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Mr. Davis, but you don't own any stocks. Master Insurance went broke."

I was glad he had made me sit down; I felt weak. "How did this happen? The Panic?"

"No, no. It was part of the collapse of the Mannix Group . . . but of course you don't know about that. It happened after the Panic, and I suppose you could say that it started from the Panic. But Master Insurance would not have gone under if it had not been systematically looted . . . gutted—'milked' is the vulgar word. If it had been an ordinary receivership, something at least would have been salvaged. But it was not. By the time it was discovered there was nothing left of the company but a hollow shell . . . and the men who had done it were beyond extradition. Uh, if it is any consolation to you, it could not happen under our present laws."

No, it was no consolation and besides I didn't believe it. My old man claimed that the more complicated the law the more opportunity for scoundrels.

But he also used to say that a wise man should be prepared to abandon his baggage at any time. I wondered how often I was going to have to do it to qualify as "wise." "Uh, Mr. Doughty, just out of curiosity, how did Mutual Assurance make out?"

"Mutual Assurance Company? A fine firm. Oh, they took their licking during the Panic, along with everybody else. But they weathered it. You have a policy with them, perhaps?"

"No." I did not offer explanation; there was no use. I couldn't look to Mutual; I had never executed my contract with them. I couldn't sue Master Insurance; there is no point in suing a bankrupt corpse.

I could sue Belle and Miles, if they were still around—but why be silly? No proof, none.

Besides, I did not want to sue Belle. It would be better to tattoo her all over with "Null and Void" . . . using a dull needle. Then I'd take up the matter of what she had done to Pete. I hadn't figured out a punishment to suit the crime for that one yet.

I suddenly remembered that it was the Mannix group that Miles and Belle had been about to sell Hired Girl, Inc. to, when they had booted me out. "Mr. Doughty? Are you sure that the Mannix people haven't any assets? Don't they own Hired Girl?"

"'Hired Girl'? Do you mean the domestic autoappliance firm?"

"Yes, of course."

"It hardly seems possible. In fact, it is not possible, since the Mannix empire, as such, no longer exists. Of course, I can't say that there never was any connection between Hired Girl Corporation and the Mannix people. But I don't believe it could have been much, if any,

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or I think I would have heard of it."

I dropped the matter. If Miles and Belle had been caught in the collapse of Mannix, that suited me fine. But, on the other hand, if Mannix had owned and milked Hired Girl, Inc., it would have hit Ricky as hard as it hit them. I didn't want Ricky hurt, no matter what the side issues were.

I stood up. "Well, thanks for breaking it gently, Mr. Doughty. I'll be on my way."

"Don't go yet. Mr. Davis . . . we of this institution feel a responsibility toward our people beyond the mere letter of the contract. You understand that yours is by no means the first case of this sort. Now our board of directors has placed a small discretionary fund at my disposal to ease such hardships. It—"

"No charity, Mr. Doughty. Thanks anyhow."

"Not charity, Mr. Davis. A loan. A character loan, you might call it. Believe me, our losses have been negligible on such loans . . . and we don't want you to walk out of here with your pockets empty."

I thought that one over twice. I didn't even have the price of a haircut. On the other hand, borrowing money is like trying to swim with a brick in each hand . . : and a small loan is tougher to pay back than a million. "Mr. Doughty," I said slowly, "Dr. Albrecht said that I was entitled to four more days of beans and bed here."

"I believe that is right—I'd have to consult your card. Not that we throw people out even when their contract time is up if they are not ready."

"I didn't suppose that you did. But what are the rates on that room I had, as hospital room and board?"

"Eh? But our rooms are not for rent in that way. We aren't a hospital; we simply maintain a recovery infirmary for our clients."

"Yes, surely. But you must figure it, at least for cost accounting purposes."

"Mmm . . . yes and no. The figures aren't allocated on that basis. The subheads are depreciation, overhead, operation, reserves, diet kitchen, personnel, and so forth. I suppose I could make an estimate."

"Uh, don't bother. What would equivalent room and board in a hospital come to?"

"That's a little out of my line. Still . . . well, you could call it about one hundred dollars per day, I suppose."

"I had four days coming. Will you lend me four hundred dollars?"

He did not answer but spoke in a number code to his mechanical assistant. Then eight $50 bills were being counted into my hand. "Thanks," I said sincerely as I tucked it away. "I'll do my

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damnedest to see that this does not stay on the books too long. Six per cent? Or is money tight?"

He shook his head. "It's not a loan. Since you put it as you did, I canceled it against your unused time."

"Huh? Now, see here, Mr. Doughty, I didn't intend to twist your arm. Of course, I'm going to—"

"Please. I told my assistant to enter the charge when I directed it to pay you. Do you want to give our auditors headaches all for a piddling four hundred dollars? I was prepared to loan you much more than that."

"Well— I can't argue it now. Say, Mr. Doughty, how much money is this? How are price levels now?"

"Mmm . . . that is a complex question."

"Just give me an idea? What does it cost to eat?"

"Food is quite reasonable. For ten dollars you can get a very satisfactory dinner . . . if you are careful to select moderate-priced restaurants."

I thanked him and left with a really warm feeling. Mr. Doughty reminded me of a paymaster I used to have in the army. Paymasters come in only two sizes: one sort shows you where the book says that you can't have what you've got coming to you; the second sort digs through the book until he finds a paragraph that lets you have what you need even if you don't rate it.

Doughty was the second sort.

The Sanctuary faced on the Wilshire Ways. There were benches in front of it and bushes and flowers. I sat down on a bench to take stock and to decide whether to go east or west. I had kept a stiff lip with Mr. Doughty but, honestly, I was badly shaken, even though I had the price of a week's meals in my jeans.

But the sun was warm and the drone of the Ways was pleasant and I was young (biologically at least) and I had two hands and my brain. Whistling "*Hallelujah, I'm a bum,*" I opened the *Times* to the "Help Wanted" columns.

I resisted the impulse to look through "Professional—Engineers" and turned at once to "Unskilled."

That classification was darned short. I almost couldn't find it.

VI

I got a job the second day, Friday December 15. I also had a mild run-in with the law and had repeated tangles with new ways of doing things, saying things, feeling about things. I discovered that "reorientation" by reading about it is like reading about sex—not the same thing.

I suppose I would have had less trouble if I had been set down in Omsk, or Santiago, or Djakarta. In going to a strange city in a

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strange land you *know* that the customs are going to be different, but in Great Los Angeles I subconsciously expected things to be unchanged even though I could see that they were changed. Of course thirty years is nothing; anybody takes that much change and more in a lifetime. But it makes a difference to take it in one bite.

Take one word I used in all innocence. A lady present was offended and only the fact that I was a Sleeper—which I hastily explained—kept her husband from giving me a mouthful of knuckes. I won't use the word here—oh, yes, I will; why shouldn't I? I'm using it to explain something. Don't take my word for it that the word was in good usage when I was a kid; look it up in an old dictionary. Nobody scrawled it in chalk on sidewalks when I was a kid.

The word was *kink*.

There were other words which I still do not use properly without stopping to think. Not taboo words necessarily, just ones with changed meanings. *Host* for example: *host* used to mean the man who took your coat and put it in the bedroom; it had nothing to do with the birth rate.

But I got along. The job I found was crushing new ground limousines so that they could be shipped back to Pittsburgh as scrap. Cadillacs, Chryslers, Eisenhowers, Lincolns—all sorts of great, big, new powerful turbobuggies without a kilometer on their clocks. Drive 'em between the jaws, then *crunch! smash! crash!*—scrap iron for blast furnaces.

It hurt me at first, since I was riding the Ways to work and didn't own so much as a gravJumper. I expressed my opinion of it and almost lost my job . . . until the shift boss remembered that I was a Sleeper and really didn't understand.

"It's a simple matter of economics, son. These are surplus cars the government has accepted as security against price-support loans. They're two years old now and they can never be sold . . . so the government junks them and sells them back to the steel industry. You can't run a blast furnace just on ore; you have to have scrap iron as well. You ought to know that, even if you are a Sleeper. Matter of fact, with high-grade ore so scarce, there's more and more demand for scrap. The steel industry needs these cars."

"But why build them in the first place, if they can't be sold? It seems wasteful."

"It just *seems* wasteful. You want to throw people out of work? You want to run down the standard of living?"

"Well, why not ship them abroad? It seems to me they could get more for them on the open market abroad than they are worth as scrap."

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"What!—and ruin the export market? Besides, if we started dumping cars abroad we'd get everybody sore at us—Japan, France, Germany, Great Asia, everybody. What are you aiming to do? Start a war?" He sighed and went on in a fatherly tone. "You go down to the public library and draw out some books. You don't have any right to opinions on these things until you know something about them."

So I shut up. I didn't tell him that I was spending all my off time at the public library or at UCLA's library; I had avoided admitting that I was, or used to be, an engineer—to claim that I was now an engineer would be too much like walking up to Du Pont's and saying, "Sirrah, I am an alchymiste. Hast need of art such as mine?"

I raised the subject just once more, because I noticed that very few of the price-support cars were really ready to run. The workmanship was sloppy and they often lacked essentials like instrument dials or air-conditioners. But when one day I noticed from the way the teeth of the crusher came down on one that it lacked even a power plant I spoke up about it.

The shift boss just stared at me. "Great jumping Jupiter, son, surely you don't expect them to put their best workmanship into cars that are just surplus? These cars had price-support loans against them before they ever came off the assembly line."

So that time I shut up and stayed shut. I had better stick to engineering; economics is too deep for me.

But I had plenty of time to think. The job I had was not really a "job" at all in my book; all the work was done by Flexible Frank in his various disguises. Frank and his brothers ran the crusher, moved the cars into place, hauled away the scrap, kept count, and weighed the loads; my job was to stand on a little platform (I wasn't allowed to sit) and hang onto a switch that could stop the whole operation if something went wrong. Nothing ever did, but I soon found that I was expected to spot at least one failure in automation each shift, stop the job, and send for a trouble crew.

Well, it paid $21 a day and it kept me eating. First things first.

After social security, guild dues, income tax, defense tax, medical plan, and the welfare mutual fund I took home about sixteen of it. Mr. Doughty was wrong about a dinner costing ten dollars; you could get a very decent plate dinner for three if you did not insist on real meat, and I would defy anyone to tell whether a hamburger steak started life in a tank, or out on the open range. With the stories going around about bootleg meat that might give you radiation poisoning I was perfectly happy with surrogates.

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Where to live had been somewhat of a problem. Since Los Angeles had not been treated to the one-second slum clearance plan in the Six Weeks War an amazing number of refugees had gone there (I suppose I was one of them, although I hadn't thought of myself as such at the time) and apparently none of them had ever gone home, even those that had homes left to go back to. The city —if you can call Great Los Angeles a city; it is more of a condition—had been choked when I went to sleep; now it was as jammed as a lady's purse. It may have been a mistake to get rid of the smog; back in the 'sixties a few people used to leave each year because of sinusitis.

Now apparently nobody left, ever.

The day I checked out of the Sanctuary I had had several things on my mind, principally (1) find a job (2) find a place to sleep (3) catch up in engineering (4) find Ricky (5) get back into engineering—on my own if humanly possible (6) find Belle and Miles and settle their hash—without going to jail for it, and (7) a slug of things, like looking up the original patent on Eager Beaver and checking my strong hunch that it was really Flexible Frank (not that it mattered now, just curiosity), and looking up the corporate history of Hired Girl, Inc., etc., etc.

I have listed the above in order of priority, as I had found out years ago (through almost flunking my freshman year in engineering) that if you didn't use priorities, when the music stopped you were left standing. Some of these priorities ran concurrently, of course; I expected to search out Ricky, and probably Belle & Co. as well, while I was boning engineering. But first things first and second things second; finding a job came even ahead of hunting for a sack because dollars are the key to everything else . . . when you haven't got them.

After getting turned down six times in town I had chased an ad clear out to San Bernardino Borough, only to get there ten minutes too late. I should have rented a flop at once; instead I played it real smart and went back downtown, intending to find a room, then get up very early and be first in line for some job listed in the early edition.

How was I to know? I got my name on four rooming-house waiting lists and wound up in the park. I stayed there, walking to keep warm, until almost midnight, then gave up—Great Los Angeles winters are subtropical only if you accent the "sub." I then took refuge in a station of Wilshire Ways . . . and about two in the morning they rounded me up with the rest of the vagrants.

Jails have improved. This one was warm and I think they re-

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quired the cockroaches to wipe their feet.

I was charged with barracking. The judge was a young fellow who didn't even look up from his newspaper but simply said, "These all first offenders?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Thirty days, or take a labor company parole. Next."

They started to march us out but I didn't budge. "Just a minute, Judge."

"Eh? Something troubling you? Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Uh, I really don't know, because I don't know what it is I have done. You see—"

"Do you want a public defender? If you do, you can be locked up until one can handle your case. I understand they are running about six days late right now . . . but it's your privilege."

"Uh, I still don't know. Maybe what I want is a labor company parole, though I'm not sure what it is. What I really want is some advice, if the Court pleases."

The judge said to the bailiff, "Take the others out." He turned back to me. "Spill it. But I'll warrant you won't like my advice. I've been on this job long enough to have heard every phony story and to have acquired a deep disgust toward most of them."

"Yes, sir. Mine isn't phony; it's easily checked. You see, I just got out of the Long Sleep yesterday and—"

But he did look disgusted. "One of those, eh? I've often wondered what made our grandparents think they could dump their riff-raff on us. The last thing on earth this city needs is more people . . . especially ones who couldn't get along in their own time. I wish I could boot you back to whatever year you came from with a message to everybody there that the future they're dreaming about is not repeat *not* paved with gold." He sighed. "But it wouldn't do any good, I'm sure. Well, what do you expect me to do? Give you another chance? Then have you pop up here again a week from now?"

"Judge, I don't think I'm likely to. I've got enough money to live until I find a job and—"

"Eh? If you've got money, what were you doing barracking?"

"Judge, I don't even know what that word means." This time he let me explain. When I came to how I had been swindled by Master Insurance Company his whole manner changed.

"Those swine! My mother got taken by them, after she had paid premiums for twenty years. Why didn't you tell me this in the first place?" He took out a card, wrote something on it, and said, "Take this to the hiring office at the Surplus & Salvage Authority. If you don't get a job, come back and see me this afternoon. But no more barracking. Not only does it

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breed crime and vice, but you yourself are running a terrible risk of meeting up with a zombie recruiter."

That's how I got a job smashing up brand-new ground cars. But I still think I made no mistake in logic in deciding to jobhunt first. Anywhere is home to the man with a fat bank account—the cops leave him alone.

I found a decent room, too, within my budget, in a part of West Los Angeles which had not yet been changed over to New Plan. I think it had formerly been a coat closet.

I would not want anyone to think I disliked the year 2000, as compared with 1970. I liked it and I liked 2001 when it rolled around a couple of weeks after they wakened me. In spite of recurrent spasms of almost unbearable homesickness, I thought that Great Los Angeles at the dawn of the Third Millennium was odds-on the most wonderful place I had ever seen. It was fast and clean and very exciting, even if it was too crowded . . . and even that was being coped with on a mammoth, venturesome scale. The New Plan parts of town were a joy to an engineer's heart. If the city government had had the sovereign power to stop immigration for ten years, they could have licked the housing problem. Since they did not have that power, they just had to do their best with the swarms that kept rolling over the Sierras—and their best was spectacular beyond belief and even the failures were colossal.

It was worth sleeping thirty years just to wake up in a time when they had licked the common cold and nobody had a post-nasal drip. That meant more to me than the research colony on Venus.

Two things impressed me most, one big, one little. The big one was NullGrav, of course. Back in 1970 I had known about the Babson Institute gravitation research but I had not expected anything to come of it—and nothing had; the basic field theory on which NullGrav is based was developed at the University of Edinburgh. But I had been taught in school that gravitation was something that nobody could ever do anything about, because it was inherent in the very shape of space.

So they changed the shape of space, naturally. Only temporarily and locally, to be sure, but that's all that's needed in moving a heavy object. It still has to stay in field relation with Mother Terra, so it's useless for spaceships—or it is in 2001; I've quit making bets about the future. I learned that to make a lift it was still necessary to expend power to overcome the gravity potential and conversely to lower something you had to have a power pack to store all those foot-pounds in, or something

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would go Phzzt!-*Spung!* But just to transport something horizontally, say from San Francisco to Great Los Angeles, just lift it once, then float along, no power at all, like an iceskater riding a long edge.

Lovely!

I tried to study the theory of it, but the math starts in where tensor calculus leaves off; it's not for me. But an engineer is rarely a mathematical physicist and he does not have to be; he simply has to savvy the skinny of a thing well enough to know what it can do in practical applications—know the working parameters. I could learn those.

The "little thing" I mentioned was the changes in female styles made possible by the Sticktite fabrics. I was not startled by mere skin on bathing beaches; you could see that coming in 1970. But the weird things that the ladies could do with Sticktite made my jaw sag.

My grandpappy was born in 1890; I suppose that some of the sights in 1970 would have affected him the same way.

But I liked the fast new world and would have been happy in it if I had not been so bitterly lonely so much of the time. I was out of joint. There were times (in the middle of the night, usually) when I would gladly have swapped it all for one beat-up tomcat, or for a chance to spend an afternoon taking little Ricky to the zoo . . . or for the comradeship Miles and I had shared when all we had was hard work and hope.

It was still early in 2001 and I wasn't halfway caught up on my homework, when I began to itch to leave my feather-bedded job and get back to the old drawing board. There were so many, many things possible under current art which had been impossible in 1970; I wanted to get busy and design a few dozen.

For example I had expected that there would be automatic secretaries in use—I mean a machine you could dictate to and get back a business letter, spelling, punctuation, and format all perfect, without a human being in the sequence. But there weren't any. Oh, somebody had invented a machine which could type, but it was suited only to a phonetic language like Esperanto and was useless in a language in which you could say: *Though the tough cough and hiccough plough him through.*

People won't give up the illogicalities of English to suit the convenience of an inventor. Mohammed must go to the mountain.

If a highschool girl could sort out the cockeyed spelling of English and usually type the right word, how could a machine be taught to do it?

"Impossible" was the usual answer. It was supposed to require human judgment.

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But an invention is something that was "impossible" up to then—that's why governments grant patents.

With memory tubes and the miniaturization now possible (I had been right about the importance of gold as an engineering material)—with those two things it would be easy to pack a hundred thousand sound codes into a cubic foot . . . in other words to sound-key every word in a Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. But that was unnecessary; ten thousand would be ample. Who expects a stenographer to field a word like *kourbash* or *pyrophyllite?* You spell such words for her, if you must use them. OK, we code the machine to accept spelling when necessary. We sound-code for punctuation . . . and for various formats . . . and to look up addresses in a file . . . and for how many copies . . . and routing . . . and provide at least a thousand blank word-codings for special vocabulary used in a business or profession—and make it so that the owner-client could put those special words in himself, spell a word like *stenobenthic* with the memory key depressed and never have to spell it again.

All simple. Just a matter of hooking together gadgets already on the market, then smoothing it into a production model.

The real hitch was homonyms. Dictation Daisy wouldn't even slow up over that *tough cough and hiccough* sentence, because each of those words carry a different sound. But choices like *they're* and *their, right* and *write* would give her trouble.

Did the L.A. Public Library have a dictionary of English homonyms? It did . . . and I began counting the unavoidable homonym pairs and trying to figure how many would require special coding.

I began to get jittery with frustration. Not only was I wasting thirty hours a week on an utterly useless job, but also I could not do real engineering in a public library. I needed a drafting room, a shop where I could smooth out the bugs, trade catalogs, professional journals, calculating machines, and all the rest.

I decided that I would just have to get at least a subprofessional job. I wasn't silly enough to think that I was an engineer again; there was too much art I had not yet soaked up—repeatedly I had thought of ways to do something, using something new that I had learned, only to find out at the library that somebody had solved the same problem, neater, better and cheaper than my own first stab at it and ten or fifteen years earlier.

I needed to get into an engineering office and let these new things soak in through my skin. I had hopes that I could land a job as a junior draftsman.

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I knew that they were using powered semi-automatic drafting machines now; I had seen pictures of them even though I had not had one under my hands. But I had a hunch that I could learn to play one in twenty minutes, given the chance, for they were remarkably like an idea I had once had myself: a machine that bore the same relation to the old-fashioned drawing-board-and-T-square method that a typewriter did to writing in longhand. I had worked it all out in my head, how you could put straight lines or curves anywhere on an easel just by punching keys.

However, in this case I was just as sure that my idea had not been stolen as I was certain that Flexible Frank had been stolen, because my drafting machine had never existed except in my head. Somebody had had the same idea and had developed it logically the same way. When it's time to railroad, people start railroading.

The Aladdin people, the same firm that made Eager Beaver, made one of the best drawing machines, Drafting Dan. I dipped into my savings, bought a better suit of clothes and a second-hand briefcase, stuffed the latter with newspapers, and presented myself at the Aladdin sales rooms with a view to "buying" one. I asked for a demonstration.

Then, when I got close to a model of Drafting Dan, I had a most upsetting experience. *Déjà vu,* the psychologists call it—"I have been here before." The damned thing had been developed in precisely the fashion in which I would have developed it, had I had time to do so . . . instead of being kidnaped into the Long Sleep.

Don't ask me exactly why I felt that way. A man knows his own style of work. An art critic will say that a painting is a Reubens, or a Rembrandt, by the brush work, the treatment of light, the composition, the choice of pigment, a dozen things. Engineering is not a science, it is an art, and there is always a wide range of choices in how to solve engineering problems. An engineering designer "signs" his work by those choices, just as surely as a painter does.

Drafting Dan had the flavor of my own technique so strongly that I was quite disturbed by it. I began to wonder if there wasn't something to telepathy after all.

I was careful to get the number of its first patent. In the state I was in I wasn't surprised to see that the date on the first one was 1970. I resolved to find out who had invented it. It might have been one of my own teachers, from whom I had picked up some of my style. Or it might be an engineer with whom I had once worked.

The inventor might still be alive.

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If so, I'd look him up some day . . . get acquainted with this man whose mind worked just like mine.

But I managed to pull myself together and let the salesman show me how to work it. He hardly need have bothered; Drafting Dan and I were made for each other. In ten minutes I could play it better than he could. At last I reluctantly quit making pretty pictures with it, got list price, discounts, service arrangements, and so forth, then left saying that I would call him, just as he was ready to get my signature on the dotted line. It was a dirty trick but all I cost him was an hour's time.

From there I went to the Hired Girl main factory and applied for a job.

I knew that Belle and Miles were no longer with Hired Girl, Inc. In what time I could spare between my job and the compelling necessity to catch up in engineering I had been searching for Belle and Miles and most especially for Ricky. None of the three was listed in the Great Los Angeles telephone system, nor for that matter anywhere in the United States, for I had paid to have an "information" search made at the national office in Cleveland. A quadruple fee, it was, as I had had Belle searched for under both "Gentry" and "Darkin."

I had the same luck with the Register of Voters for Los Angeles County.

Hired Girl, Inc., in a letter from a seventeenth vice president in charge of foolish questions, admitted cautiously that they had once had officers by those names thirty years ago but they were unable to help me now.

Picking up a trail thirty years cold is no job for an amateur with little time and less money. I did not have their fingerprints, or I might have tried the FBI. I didn't know their social security numbers. My Country 'Tis of Thee had never succumbed to police-state nonsense so there was no bureau certain to have a dossier on each citizen, nor was I in a position to tap such a file even if there had been.

Perhaps a detective agency, lavishly subsidized, could have dug through utilities records, newspaper files, and God knows what, and traced them down. But I didn't have the lavish subsidy, nor the talent and time to do it myself.

I finally gave up on Miles and Belle while promising myself that I would, as quickly as I could afford it, put professionals to tracing Ricky. I had already determined that she held no Hired Girl stock and I had written to the Bank of America to see if they held, or ever had held, a trust for her. I got back a form letter informing me that such things were confidential, so I had written

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again, saying that I was a Sleeper and she was my only surviving relative. That time I got a nice letter, signed by one of the trust officers and saying that he regretted that information concerning trustors could not be divulged even to one in my exceptional circumstances, but he felt justified in giving me the negative information that the bank had not at any time through any of its branches held a trust in favor of one Frederica Virginia Gentry.

That seemed to settle one thing. Somehow those birds had managed to get the stock away from little Ricky. My assignment of the stock would have had to go through the Bank of America, the way I had written it. But it had not. Poor Ricky! We had both been robbed.

I made one more stab at it. The Records Office of the Superintendent of Instruction in Mojave did have record of a grade school pupil named Frederica Virginia Gentry . . . but the named pupil had taken a withdrawal transcript in 1971. Further deponent sayeth not.

It was some consolation to know that somebody somewhere admitted that Ricky had ever existed. But she might have taken that transcript to any of many, many thousand public schools in the United States. How long would it take to write to each of them? And were their records so arranged as to permit them to answer, even supposing they were willing?

In a quarter of a billion people, one little girl can drop out of sight like a pebble in the ocean.

But the failure of my search did leave me free to seek a job with Hired Girl, Inc., now that I knew Miles and Belle were not running it. I could have tried any of a hundred automation firms, but Hired Girl and Aladdin were the big names in appliance automatons, as important in their own field as Ford and General Motors had been in the heyday of the ground automobile. I picked Hired Girl partly for sentimental reasons; I wanted to see my old outfit.

On Monday, March 5, 2001, I went to their employment office, got into the line for white-collar help, filled out a dozen forms having nothing to do with engineering and one that did . . . and was told don't-call-us-we'll-call-you.

I hung around and managed to bull myself in to see an assistant hiring flunky. He reluctantly looked over the one form that could mean anything and told me that my engineering degree meant nothing, since there had been a thirty-year lapse when I had not used my skill.

I pointed out that I had been a Sleeper.

"That makes it even worse. In any case we don't hire people over forty-five."

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"But I'm *not* forty-five. I'm only thirty."

"You were born in 1940. Sorry."

"What am I supposed to do? Shoot myself?"

He shrugged. "If I were you, I'd apply for an old-age pension."

I got out quickly, before I gave him some advice. Then I walked three-quarters of a mile around to the front entrance and went in. The General Manager's name was Curtis; I asked for him.

I got past the first two layers simply by insisting that I had business with him. Hired Girl, Inc., did not use their own automatons as receptionists; they used real flesh-and-blood. Eventually I reached a place several stories up and (I judged) about two doors from the boss and here I encountered a firm pass-gauge type who insisted on knowing my business.

I looked around. It was a largish office, with about forty real people in it, as well as a lot of machines. She said sharply, "Well? State your business and I'll check with Mr. Curtis' appointment secretary."

I said loudly, making sure that everybody heard it, "I want to know what he's going to do about my wife!"

Sixty seconds later I was in his private office. He looked up. "Well? What the devil is this nonsense?"

It took half an hour and some old records to convince him that I did not have a wife and that I actually was the founder of the firm. Then things got chummy over drinks and cigars and I met the sales manager and the chief engineer and other heads of departments. "We thought you were dead," Curtis told me. "In fact, the company's official history says that you are."

"Just a rumor. Some other D. B. Davis."

The sales manager, Jack Galloway, said suddenly, "What are you doing now, Mr. Davis?"

"Not much. I've, uh, been in the automobile business. But I'm resigning. Why?"

"'Why?' Isn't it obvious?" He swung around toward the chief engineer, Mr. McBee. "Hear that, Mac? All you engineers are alike; you wouldn't know a sales angle if it came up and kissed you. 'Why,' Mr. Davis? Because you're sales copy, that's why! Because you're romance. Founder of Firm Comes Back from Grave to Visit Brain Child. Inventor of the First Robot Servant Views Fruits of His Genius."

I said hastily, "Now, wait a minute—I'm not an advertising model nor a grabbie star. I like my privacy. I didn't come here for that; I came here for a job . . . in engineering."

Mr. McBee's eyebrows went up but he said nothing.

We wrangled for a while. Galloway tried to tell me that it was my simple duty to the firm I had

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founded. McBee said little but it was obvious that he did not think I would be any addition to his department—at one point he asked me what I knew about designing solid circuits. I had to admit that my only knowledge of them was from a little reading of non-classified publications.

Curtis finally suggested a compromise. "See here, Mr. Davis, you obviously occupy a very special position. One might say that you founded not merely this firm but the whole industry. Nevertheless, as Mr. McBee has hinted, the industry has moved on since the Sleep. Suppose we put you on the staff with the title of . . . uh, 'Research Engineer Emeritus.'"

I hesitated. "What would that mean?"

"Whatever you made it mean. However I tell you frankly that you would be expected to cooperate with Mr. Galloway. We not only make these things, we have to sell them."

"Uh, would I have a chance to do any engineering?"

"That's up to you. You'd have facilities and you could do what you wished."

"Shop facilities?"

Curtis looked at McBee. The chief engineer answered, "Certainly, certainly . . . within reason, of course." He had slipped so far into Glasgow speech that I could hardly understand him.

Galloway said briskly, "That's settled. May I be excused, B. J.? Don't go away, Mr. Davis—we're going to get a picture of you with the very first model of Hired Girl."

And he did. I was glad to see her . . . the very model I had put together with my own pinkies and lots of sweat. I wanted to see if she still worked but McBee wouldn't let me start her up—I don't think he really believed that I knew how she worked.

I had a good time at Hired Girl all through March and April. I had all the professional tools I could want, technical journals, the indispensable trade catalogs, a practical library, a Drafting Dan (Hired Girl did not make a drafting machine themselves, so they used the best on the market, which was Aladdin's), and the shop talk . . . music to my ears!

I got acquainted especially with Chuck Freudenberg, components assistant chief engineer. For my money Chuck was the only real engineer there; the rest were overeducated slipstick mechanics . . . including McBee, for the chief engineer was, I thought, a clear proof that it took more than a degree and a Scottish accent to make an engineer. After we got better acquainted, Chuck admitted that he felt the same way. "Mac doesn't really like anything new; he would rather do things the way his grandpa did on the bonnie banks of the Clyde."

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"What's he doing in this job?"

Freudenberg did not know the details but it seemed that the present firm had been a manufacturing company which had simply rented the patents (my patents) from Hired Girl, Inc. Then about twenty years ago there had been one of those tax-saving mergers, with Hired Girl stock swapped for stock in the manufacturing firm and the new firm taking the name of the one I had founded. Chuck thought that McBee had been hired at that time.

Chuck and I used to sit over beers in the evening and discuss engineering, what the company needed, and the whichness of what. His original interest in me had been that I was a Sleeper. Too many people, I had found, had a queasy interest in Sleepers (as if we were freaks) and I avoided letting people know that I was one. But Chuck was fascinated by the time jump itself and his interest was a healthy one in what the world had been like before he was born, as recalled by a man who literally remembered it as "only yesterday."

In return he was willing to criticize the new gadgets that were always boiling up in my head, and set me straight when I (as I did repeatedly) would rough out something that was old hat . . . in 2001 A.D. Under his friendly guidance I was becoming a modern engineer, catching up fast.

But when I outlined to him one April evening my autosecretary idea he said slowly, "Dan, have you done work on this on company time?"

"Huh? No, not really. Why?"

"How does your contract read?"

"What? I don't have one." Curtis had put me on the payroll and Galloway had taken pictures of me and had a ghost writer asking me silly questions; that was all.

"Mmm . . . pal, I wouldn't do anything about this until you are sure where you stand. This is really new. And I think you can make it work."

"I hadn't worried about that angle."

"Put it away for a while. You know the shape the company is in. It's making money and we put out good products. But the only new items we've brought out in five years are ones we've acquired by license. *I* can't get anything new past Mac. But you can bypass Mac and take this to the big boss. So don't . . . unless you want to hand it over to the company just for your salary check."

I took his advice. I continued to design but I burned any drawings I thought were good—I didn't need them, once I had them in my head. I didn't feel guilty about it; they hadn't hired me as an engineer, they were paying me to be a show window dummy for Galloway. When my advertising value was sucked dry, they would

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give me a month's pay and a vote of thanks and let me go.

But by then I'd be a real engineer again and able to open my own office. If Chuck wanted to take a flyer, I'd take him with me.

Instead of handing my story to the newspapers Jack Galloway played it slow for the national magazines; he wanted *Life* to do a spread, tying it in with the one they had done a third of a century earlier on the first production model of Hired Girl. *Life* did not rise to the bait but he did manage to plant it several other places that spring, tying it in with display advertising.

I thought of growing a beard. Then I realized that no one recognized me and would not have cared if they had.

I got a certain amount of crank mail, including one from a man who promised me that I would burn eternally in hell for defying God's plan for my life. I chucked it, while thinking that if God had really opposed what had happened to me, He should never have made cold-sleep possible. Otherwise I wasn't bothered.

But I did get a phone call, on Thursday, May 3, 2001. "Mrs. Schultz is on the line, sir. Will you take the call?"

Schultz? Damnation, I had promised Doughty the last time I had called him that I would take care of that. But I had put it off because I did not want to; I was almost sure it was one of those screwballs who pursued Sleepers and asked them personal questions.

But she had called several times, Doughty had told me, since I had checked out in December. In accordance with the policy of the sanctuary they had refused to give her my address, agreeing merely to pass along messages.

Well, I owed it to Doughty to shut her up. "Put her on."

"Is this Danny Davis?" My office phone had no screen; she could not see me.

"Speaking. Your name is Schultz?"

"Oh, Danny darling, it's so *good* to hear your voice!"

I didn't answer right away. She went on, "Don't you *know* me?"

I knew her, all right. It was Belle Gentry.

VII

I made a date with her.

My first impulse had been to tell her to go to hell and switch off. I had long since realized that revenge was childish; revenge would not bring Pete back and fitting revenge would simply land me in jail. I had hardly thought about Belle and Miles since I had quit looking for them.

But Belle almost certainly knew where Ricky was. So I made a date.

She wanted me to take her to dinner, but I would not do that.

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I'm not fussy about fine points of etiquette. But eating is something you do only with friends; I would see her but I had no intention of eating or drinking with her. I got her address and told her I would be there that evening at eight.

It was a cheap rental, a walk-up flat in a part of town (lower La Brea) not yet converted to New Plan. Before I buzzed her door I knew that she had not hung on to what she had bilked me out of, or she would not have been living there.

And when I saw her I realized that revenge was much too late; she and the years had managed it for me.

Belle was not less than 53 by the age she had claimed, and probably closer to 60 in fact. Between geriatrics and endocrinology a woman who cared to take the trouble could stay looking 30 for at least 30 extra years, and lots of them did. There were grabbie stars who boasted of being grandmothers while still playing ingenue leads.

Belle had not taken the trouble.

She was fat and shrill and kittenish. It was evident that she still considered her body her principal asset for she was dressed in a Sticktite negligee which, while showing much too much of her, also showed that she was female, mammalian, overfed, and underexercised.

She was not aware of it. That once-keen brain was fuzzy; all that was left was her conceit and her over-powering confidence in herself. She threw herself on me with squeals of joy and came close to kissing me before I could unwind her.

I pushed her wrists back. "Take it easy, Belle."

"But, darling! I'm so happy—so excited—and so *thrilled* to see you!"

"I'll bet." I had gone there resolved to keep my temper . . . just find out what I wanted to know and get out. But I was finding it difficult. "Remember how you saw me last? Drugged to my eyebrows so that you could stuff me into cold sleep?"

She looked puzzled and hurt. "But, sweetheart, we only did it for your own good! You were *so* ill."

I think she believed it. "OK, OK. Where's Miles? You're Mrs. Schultz now?"

Her eyes grew wide. "Didn't you *know?*"

"Know what?"

"Poor Miles . . . poor, *dear* Miles. He lived less than two years, Danny Boy, after you left us." Her expression changed suddenly. "The frallup cheated me!"

"That's too bad." I wondered how he had died. Did he fall, or was he pushed? Arsenic soup? I decided to stick to the main issue, before she jumped the track completely. "What became of Ricky?"

"Ricky?"

"Miles's little girl. Frederica."

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"Oh, that horrible little brat! How should I know? She went to live with her grandmother."

"Where? And what was her grandmother's name?"

"Where? Tucson—or Yuma—or some place dull like that. It might have been Indio. Darling, I don't want to talk about that impossible child—I want to talk about *us*."

"In a moment. What was her grandmother's name?"

"Danny Boy, you're very tiresome. Why in the world should I remember something like that?"

"What was it?"

"Oh, Hanolon . . . or Haney . . . or Heinz. Or it might have been Hinckley. Don't be dull, dear. Let's have a drink."

I shook my head. "I don't use the stuff." This was almost true. Having discovered that it was an unreliable friend in a crisis I usually limited myself to a beer with Chuck Freudenberg.

"How very dull, dearest. You won't mind if I have one." She was already pouring it—straight gin, the lonely girl's friend. But before she downed it, she picked up a plastic pill bottle and rolled two capsules into her palm. "Have one?"

I recognized the striped casing —euphorion. It was supposed to be non-toxic and non-habitforming but opinions differed. There was agitation to class it with morphine and the barbiturates. "Thanks. I'm happy now."

"How nice." She took both of them, chased them with gin. I decided if I was to learn anything at all I had better talk fast; soon she would be nothing but giggles.

I took her arm and sat her down on her couch, then sat down across from her. "Belle, tell me about yourself. Bring me up to date. How did you and Miles make out with the Mannix people?"

"Uh? But we didn't." She suddenly flared up. "That was *your* fault!"

"Huh? My fault? I wasn't even there."

"Of course it was your fault. That monstrous thing you built out of an old wheelchair . . . *that* was what they wanted. And then it was gone."

"Gone? Where was it?"

She speered at me with piggy, suspicious eyes. "You ought to know. You took it."

"Me? Belle, are you crazy? I couldn't take anything. I was frozen stiff, in cold sleep. Where was it? And when did it disappear?" It fitted in with my own notions that somebody must have swiped Flexible Frank, if Belle and Miles had not made use of him. But out of all the billions on the globe, I was the one who certainly had not. I had not seen Frank since that disastrous night when they had outvoted me. "Tell me about it, Belle. Where was it? And what made you think I took it?"

"It had to be you. Nobody else

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knew it was important. That pile of junk! I *told* Miles not to put it in the garage."

"But if somebody did swipe it, I doubt if they could make it work. You still had all the notes and instructions and drawings."

"No, we didn't either. Miles, the fool! had stuffed them all inside it, the night we had to move it to protect it."

I did not fuss about the word "protect." Instead I was about to say that he couldn't possibly have stuffed several pounds of paper into Flexible Frank; he was already stuffed like a *goose*—when I remembered that I had built a temporary shelf across the bottom of his wheelchair base to hold tools while I worked on him. A man in a hurry might very well have emptied my working files into it.

No matter. The crime, or crimes, had been committed thirty years ago. I wanted to find out how Hired Girl, Inc. had slipped away from them. "After the Mannix deal fell through, what did you do with the company?"

"We ran it, of course. Then when Jake quit us, Miles said we had to shut down. Miles was a weakling . . . and I never liked that Jake Schmidt. Sneaky. Always asking why you had quit . . . as if we could have stopped you! I wanted us to hire a *good* foreman and keep going. The company would have been worth more. But Miles insisted."

"What happened then?"

"Why, then we licensed to Geary Manufacturing, of course. You know that; you're working there now."

I did know that; the full corporate name of Hired Girl was now "Hired Girl Appliances and Geary Manufacturing, Inc."—even though the signs read simply "Hired Girl." I seemed to have found out all I needed to know that this flabby old wreck could tell me.

But I was curious on another point. "You two sold your stock after you licensed to Geary?"

"Huh? Whatever put that silly notion in your head?" Her expression broke and she began to blubber, pawing feebly for a handkerchief, then giving up and letting the tears go. "He cheated me! He cheated me! The dirty shiker *cheated* me . . . he kinked me out of it." She snuffled and added meditatively, "You all cheated me . . . and you were the worst of the lot, Danny Boy. After I had been so good to you." She started to bawl again.

I decided that euphorion wasn't worth whatever it cost. Or maybe she enjoyed crying. "How did he cheat you, Belle?"

"What? Why, *you* know. He left it all to that dirty brat of his . . . after all that he had promised me . . . after I nursed him when he hurt so. And she *wasn't even his own daughter*. That proves it."

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It was the first good news I had had all evening. Apparently Ricky had received one good break, even if they had grabbed my stock away from her earlier. So I got back to the main point. "Belle, what was Ricky's grandmother's name? And where did they live?"

"Where did *who* live?"

"Ricky's grandmother."

"Who's Ricky?"

"Miles's daughter. Try to think, Belle. It's important."

That set her off. She pointed a finger at me and shrilled, "I know *you*. You were in *love* with her, that's what. That dirty little sneak . . . her and that horrible cat."

I felt a burst of anger at the mention of Pete. But I tried to suppress it. I simply grabbed her shoulders and shook her a little. "Brace up, Belle. I want to know just one thing. Where did they live? How did Miles address letters when he wrote to them?"

She kicked at me. "I won't even talk to you! You've been perfectly stinking ever since you got here." Then she appeared to sober almost instantly and said quietly, "I don't know. The grandmother's name was Heneker, or something like that. I only saw her once, in court, when they came to see about the will."

"When was that?"

"Right after Miles died, of course."

"When did Miles die, Belle?"

She switched again. "You want to know too much. You're as bad as the sheriffs . . . questions, questions, questions!" Then she looked up and said pleadingly, "Let's forget everything and just be ourselves. There's just you and me now, dear . . . and we still have our lives ahead of us. A woman isn't old at thirty-nine . . . Schultzie said I was the youngest thing he ever saw—and that old goat had seen plenty, let me tell you! We could be so happy, dear. We—"

I had had all I could stand, even to play detective. "I've got to go, Belle."

"What, dear? Why, it's early . . . and we've got all night ahead of us. I thought—"

"I don't care what you thought. I've got to leave, right now."

"Oh, dear! Such a pity. When will I see you again? Tomorrow? I'm terribly busy, but I'll break my engagements and—"

"I won't be seeing you again, Belle." I left.

I never did see her again.

As soon as I was home I took a hot bath, scrubbing hard. Then I sat down and tried to add up what I had found out, if anything. Belle seemed to think that Ricky's grandmother's name began with an "H"—if Belle's maunderings meant anything at all, a matter highly doubtful—and that they had lived in one of the desert towns in Arizona, or possibly California.

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Well, perhaps professional skiptracers could make something of that.

Or maybe not. In any case it would be tedious and expensive; I'd have to wait until I could afford it.

Did I know anything else that signified?

Miles had died (so Belle said) around 1972. If he had died in this county I ought to be able to find the date in a couple of hours of searching, and after that I ought to be able to track down the hearing on his will . . . if there had been one, as Belle had implied. Through that I might be able to find out where Ricky had lived then. If courts kept such records. (I didn't know.) If I had gained anything by cutting the lapse down to 28 years and locating the town she had lived in that long ago.

If there was any point in looking for a woman now 41 and almost certainly married and with a family. The jumbled ruin that had once been Belle Darkin had shaken me; I was beginning to realize what 30 years could mean. Not that I feared that Ricky grown up would be anything but gracious and good . . . but would she even remember me? Oh, I did not think she would have forgotten me entirely; but wasn't it likely that I would be just a faceless person, the man she had sometimes called "Uncle Danny" and who had that nice cat?

Wasn't I, in my own way, living in a fantasy of the past quite as much as Belle was?

Oh, well, it couldn't hurt to try again to find her. At the least, we could exchange Christmas cards each year. Her husband could not very well object to that.

VIII

The next morning was Friday May 4. Instead of going into the office I went down to the county Hall of Records. They were moving everything and told me to come back next month, so I went to the office of the *Times* and got a crick in my neck from a microscanner. But I did find out that if Miles had died any date between 12 and 36 months after I had been tucked in the freezer, he had not done so in Los Angeles County—if the death notices were correct.

Of course there was no law requiring him to die in L.A. County. You can die anyplace. They've never managed to regulate that.

Perhaps Sacramento had consolidated state records. I decided I would have to check someday, thanked the *Times* librarian, went out to lunch, and eventually got back to Hired Girl, Inc.

There were two phone calls and a note waiting, all from Belle. I got as far in the note as *"Dearest Dan,"* tore it up and told the desk not to accept any calls for me from Mrs. Schultz. Then I went over to the

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accounting office and asked the chief accountant if there was any way to check up on past ownership of a retired stock issue. He said he would try and I gave him the numbers, from memory, of the original Hired Girl stock I had once held. It took no feat of memory; we had issued exactly one thousand shares to start with and I had held the first five hundred and ten, and Belle's "engagement present" had come off the front.

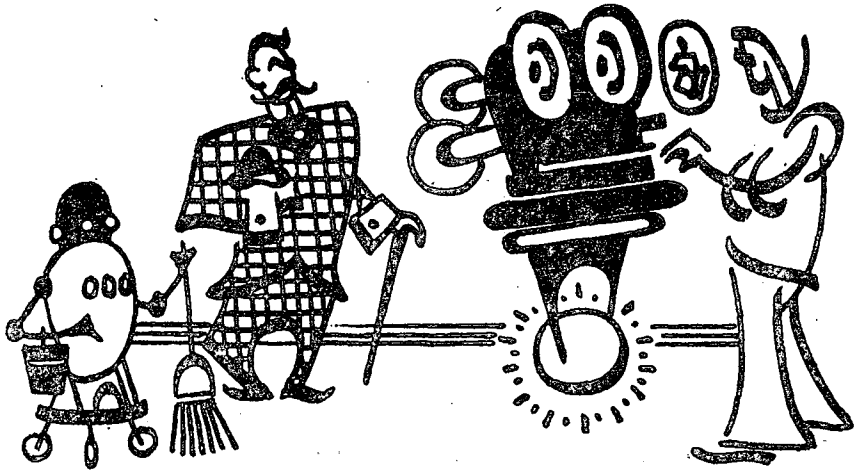
I went back to my cubbyhole and found McBee waiting for me.

"Where have you been?" he wanted to know.

"Out and around. Why?"

"That's hardly a sufficient answer. Mr. Galloway was in twice today, looking for you. I was forced to tell him I did not know where you were."

"Oh, for Pete's sake! If Galloway wants me, he'll find me, eventually. If he spent half the time peddling the merchandise on its merits that he does trying to think up cute new angles, the firm would be better off." Galloway was beginning to annoy me. He was supposed to be in charge of selling, but it seemed to me that he concentrated on kibitzing the advertising agency that handled our account. But I'm prejudiced; engineering is the only part that interests me. All the rest strikes me as paper shuffling, mere overhead.



I knew what Galloway wanted me for and, to tell the truth, I had been dragging my feet. He wanted to dress me up in 1900 costumes and take pictures. I had told him that he could take all the pix he wanted of me in 1970 costumes,

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but that 1900 was twelve years before my father was born. He said nobody would know the difference, so I told him what the fortuneteller told the cop. He said I didn't have the right attitude.

These people who deal in fancification to fool the public think nobody can read and write but themselves.

McBee said, "You don't have the right attitude, Mr. Davis."

"So? I'm sorry."

"You're in an odd position. You are charged to my department, but I'm supposed to make you available to Advertising & Sales when they need you. From here on I think you had better use the timeclock like everyone else . . . and you had better check with me whenever you leave the office during working hours. Please see to it."

I counted to ten slowly, using binary notation. "Mac, do *you* use the timeclock?"

"Eh? Of course not. I'm the chief engineer."

"So you are. It says so, right over on that door. But see here, Mac, I was chief engineer of this bolt bin before you started to shave. Do you really think that I am going to knuckle under to a timeclock?"

He turned red. "Possibly not. But I can tell you this: if you don't, you won't draw your check."

"So? You didn't hire me; you can't fire me."

"Mmm . . . we'll see. I can at least transfer you out of my department and over to Advertising, where you belong. If you belong anywhere." He glanced at my drafting machine. "You certainly aren't producing anything here. I don't fancy having that expensive machine tied up any longer." He nodded briskly. "Good day."

I followed him out. An Office Boy rolled in and placed a large envelope in my basket but I did not wait to see what it was; I went down to the staff coffee bar and fumed. Like a lot of other triple-ought gauge minds, Mac thought creative work could be done by the numbers. No wonder the old firm hadn't produced anything new for years.

Well, to hell with him. I hadn't planned to stick around much longer anyway.

An hour or so later I wandered back up and found an interoffice mail envelope in my basket. I opened it, thinking that Mac had decided to throw the switch on me at once.

But it was from accounting; it read:

Dear Mr. Davis:

Re: the stock you inquired about Dividends on the larger block were paid from first quarter 1971 to second quarter 1980 on the original shares to a trust held in favor of a party named Heinicke. Our reorganization took place in 1980 and the abstract at hand is some-

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what obscure but it appears that the equivalent shares (after reorganization) were sold to Cosmopolitan Insurance Group, which still holds them. Regarding the smaller block of stock, it was held (as you suggested) by Belle D. Gentry until 1972, when it was assigned to Sierra Acceptances Corporation, who broke it up and sold it piecemeal "over the counter." The exact subsequent history of each share and their equivalents after reorganization could be traced, if needed, but more time would be required.

If this department can be of any further assistance to you, please feel free to call on us.

Y. E. Reuther, Ch. Acct.

I called Reuther and thanked him and told him that I had all I wanted. My attempt to assign my stock to little Ricky Gentry had quite evidently failed. Right at the moment I wasn't even interested in trying to track down this third party who had gotten his hands on it—but I was morally certain that it was really Belle . . . one of her stooges or even a fictitious person; she was probably already planning on swindling Miles by then. But there was no point now in facing her with it and tracing out the shenanigan; the stock was gone and Belle was broke.

Apparently she had been short of cash after Miles's death and had sold off the smaller block. But I did not care what had happened to any of the stock once it passed out of Belle's control. I had forgotten to ask Reuther to trace Miles's stock . . . that might give a lead to Ricky even though she no longer held it. But it was late Friday already; I'd ask him Monday. Right now I wanted to open the large envelope still waiting for me, for I had spotted the return address.

I had written to the patent office early in March about the original patents on both Eager Beaver and Drafting Dan. My conviction that the original Eager Beaver was just another name for Flexible Frank had been somewhat shaken by my upsetting first experience with Drafting Dan; I had considered the possibility that the same unknown genius who had conceived Dan so nearly as I had imagined him might also have developed a parallel equivalent of Flexible Frank. The theory was bulwarked by the fact that both patents had been taken out the same year and both patents were held (or had been held until they expired) by the same company, Aladdin.

But I had to know. And if this inventor was still alive, I wanted to meet him. He could teach me a thing or four.

I had written first to the Patent Office, only to get a form letter back that all records of expired patents were now kept in the National Archives in Carlsbad Cav-

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erns. So I wrote the Archives and got another form letter with a schedule of fees. So I wrote a third time, sending a postal order *(no personal checks, please)* for prints of the whole works on both patents —descriptions, claims, drawings, histories.

This fat envelope looked like my answer.

The one on top was 4,307,909, the basic for Eager Beaver. I turned to the drawings, ignoring for the moment both description and claims. Claims aren't important anyway, except in court; the basic notion in writing up claims on an application for patent is to claim the whole, wide world in the broadest possible terms, then let the patent examiners chew you down—this is why patent attorneys are born. The descriptions, on the other hand, have to be factual, but I can read drawings faster than I can read descriptions.

I had to admit that it did not look too much like Flexible Frank. It was better than Flexible Frank; it could do more and some of the linkages were simpler. The basic notion was the same—but that had to be true, as a machine controlled by Thorsen tubes and ancestral to Eager Beaver had to be based on the same principles I had used in Flexible Frank.

I could almost see myself developing just such a device . . . sort of a second-stage model of Frank. I had once had something of the sort in mind—Frank without Frank's household limitations.

I finally got around to looking up the inventor's name on the claims & description sheets.

I recognized it all right. It was D. B. Davis.

I looked at it, while whistling "Time On My Hands" slowly and off key. So Belle had lied again. I wondered if there was any truth at all in that spate of drivel she had fed me. Of course, Belle was a pathological liar, but I had read somewhere that pathological liars usually have a pattern, starting from the truth and embellishing it, rather than indulging in complete fancy. Quite evidently my model of Frank had never been "stolen" but had been turned over to some other engineer to smooth up, then the application had been made in my name.

But the Mannix deal had never gone through; that one fact was certain, since I knew it from company records. But Belle had said that their failure to produce Flexible Frank as contracted had soured the Mannix deal.

Had Miles grabbed Frank for himself, letting Belle think that it had been stolen? Or re-stolen, rather.

In that case . . . I dropped guessing at it, as hopeless, more hopeless than the search for Ricky. I might have to take a job with Aladdin before I would be able to ferret out where they had gotten

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the basic patent and who had benefitted by the deal. It probably was not worth it, since the patent was expired, Miles was dead, and Belle, if she had gained a dime out of it, had long since thrown it away. I had satisfied myself on the one point important to me, the thing I had set out to prove, *i.e.*, that I myself was the original inventor. My professional pride was salved and who cares about money when three meals a day are taken care of? Not me.

So I turned to 4,307,910, the first Drafting Dan.

The drawings were a delight. I couldn't have planned it better myself; this boy really had it. I admired the economy of the linkages and the clever way the circuits had been used to reduce the moving parts to a minimum. Moving parts are like the vermiform appendix; a source of trouble to be done away with whenever possible.

He had even used an electric typewriter for his keyboard chassis, giving credit on the drawing to an IBM patent series. That was smart, that was engineering: never re-invent something that you can buy down the street.

I had to know who this brainy boy was, so I turned to the papers.

It was D. B. Davis.

After quite a long time I phoned Dr. Albrecht. They rounded him up and I told him who I was, since my office phone had no visual.

"I recognized your voice," he answered. "Hi, there, son. How are you getting along with your new job?"

"Well enough. They haven't offered me a partnership yet."

"Give them time. Happy otherwise? Find yourself fitting back in?"

"Oh, sure! If I had known what a great place here and now is, I'd have taken the Sleep earlier. You couldn't hire me to go back to 1970."

"Oh, come now! I remember that year pretty well. I was a kid then, on a farm in Nebraska. I used to hunt and fish. I had fun. More than I have now."

"Well, to each his own. I like it now. But look, Doc, I didn't call up just to talk philosophy; I've got a little problem."

"Well, let's have it. It ought to be a relief; most people have big problems."

"Doc? Is it at all possible for the Long Sleep to cause amnesia?"

He hesitated before replying. "It is conceivably possible. I can't say that I've ever seen a case, as such. I mean unconnected with other causes."

"What are the things that cause amnesia?"

"Any number of things. The commonest, perhaps, is the patient's own subconscious wish. He forgets a sequence of events, or rearranges them, because the facts are unbearable to him. That's a func-

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tional amnesia in the raw. Then there is the old-fashioned knock on the head—amnesia from trauma. Or it might be amnesia through suggestion . . . under drugs or hypnosis. What's the matter, bub? Can't you find your check book?"

"It's not that. So far as I know, I'm getting along just fine, now. But I can't get some things straight that happened before I took the Sleep . . . and it's got me worried."

"Mmm . . . any possibility of any of the causes I mentioned?"

"Yes," I said slowly. "Uh, all of them, except maybe the bump on the head . . . and even that might have happened while I was drunk."

"I neglected to mention," he said dryly, "the commonest temporary amnesia—pulling a blank while under the affluence of incohol. See here, son, why don't you come see me and we'll talk it over in detail? If I can't tag what is biting you—I'm not a psychiatrist, you know—I can turn you over to a hypnoanalyst who will peel back your memory like an onion and tell you why you were late to school on the fourth of February your second-grade year. But he's pretty expensive so why not give me a whirl first?"

I said, "Cripes, Doc, I've bothered you too much already . . . and you are pretty stuffy about taking money."

"Son, I'm always interested in my people; they're all the family I have."

So I put him off by saying that I would call him the first of the week if I wasn't straightened out. I wanted to think about it, anyhow.

Most of the lights went out except in my office; a Hired Girl, scrub-woman type, looked in, twigged that the room was still occupied, and rolled silently away. I still sat there.

Presently Chuck Freudenberg stuck his head in and said, "I thought you left long ago. Wake up and finish your sleep at home."

I looked up. "Chuck, I've got a wonderful idea. Let's buy a barrel of beer and two straws."

He considered it carefully. "Well, it's Friday . . . and I always like to have a head on Monday; it lets me know what day it is."

"Carried and so ordered. Wait a second while I stuff some things in this briefcase."

We had some beers, then we had some food, then we had more beers at a place where the music was good, then we moved on to another place where there was no music and the booths had hush linings and they didn't disturb you as long as you ordered something about once an hour. We talked. I showed him the patent records.

Chuck looked over the *Eager Beaver* prototype. "That's a real nice job, Dan. I'm proud of you, boy. I'd would like your autograph."

"But look at this one." I gave him the drafting machine patent papers.

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"Some ways this one is even nicer. Dan, do you realize that you probably had more influence on the present state of the art than, well, than Edison had, in his period? You know that, boy?"

"Cut it out, Chuck; this is serious." I gestured abruptly at the pile of photostats. "Okay, so I'm responsible for one of them. But I *can't* be responsible for the other one. I didn't do it . . . unless I'm completely mixed up about my own life before I took the Sleep. Unless I've got amnesia."

"You've been saying that for the past twenty minutes. But you don't seem to have any open circuits. You're no crazier than is normal in an engineer."

I banged the table, making the steins dance. "I've got to *know!*"

"Steady there. So what are you going to do?"

"Huh?" I pondered it. "I'm going to pay a psychiatrist to dig it out of me."

He sighed. "I thought you might say that. Now look, Dan, let's suppose you pay this brain mechanic to do this and he reports that nothing is wrong, your memory is in fine shape, and all your relays are closed. What then?"

"That's impossible."

"That's what they told Columbus. You haven't even mentioned the most likely explanation."

"Huh? What?"

Without answering he signaled the waiter and told it to bring back the big phone book, extended area. I said, "What's the matter? You calling the wagon for me?"

"Not yet." He thumbed through the enormous book, then stopped and said, "Dan, scan this."

I looked. He had his finger on "Davis." There were columns of Davis's. But where he had his finger there were a dozen D. B. Davis's—from Dabney to Duncan.

There were three Daniel B. Davis's. One of them was me.

"That's from less than seven million people," he pointed out. "Want to try your luck on more than two hundred and fifty million?"

"It doesn't prove anything," I said feebly.

"No," he agreed, "it doesn't. It would be quite a coincidence, I readily agree, if two engineers with such similar talents happened to be working on the same sort of thing at the same time and just happened to have the same last name and the same initials. By the laws of statistics we could probably approximate just how unlikely it is that it would happen. But people forget—especially those who ought to know better, such as yourself—that while the laws of statistics tell you how unlikely a particular coincidence is, they state just as firmly that coincidences *do happen*. This looks like one. I like that a lot better than I like the theory that my beer buddy has slipped his cams."

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"What do you think I ought to do?"

"The first thing to do is not to waste your time and money on a psychiatrist until you try the second thing. The second thing is to find out the first name of this D. B. Davis who filed this patent. There will be some easy way to do that. Likely as not his first name will be Dexter. Or even Dorothy. But don't trip a breaker if it is Daniel because the middle name might be Berzowski with a social security number different from yours. And the third thing to do, which is really the first, is to forget it for now and order another round."

So we did, and talked of other things, particularly women. Chuck had a theory that women were closely related to machinery, both utterly unpredictable by logic. He drew graphs on the table top in beer to prove his thesis.

Some time later I said suddenly, "If there were real time travel, I know what I would do."

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"About my problem. Look, Chuck, I got here—got to 'now' I mean—by a sort of half-baked, horse-and-buggy time travel. But the trouble is I can't go back. All the things that are worrying me happened thirty years ago. I'd go back and dig out the truth . . . if there were such a thing as real time travel."

He stared at me. "But there *is*."

"*What?*"

He suddenly sobered. "I shouldn't have said that."

I said, "Maybe not, but you already have said it. Now you'd better tell me what you meant before I empty this here stein over your head."

"Forget it, Dan. I made a slip."

"Talk!"

"That's just what I can't do." He glanced around. No one was near us. "It's classified."

"Time travel classified? Good God, *why?*"

"Hell, boy, didn't you ever work for the government? They'd classify sex if they could. There doesn't have to be a reason; it's just their *policy*. But it *is* classified and I'm bound by it. So lay off."

"But — Quit fooling around about it, Chuck; this is important to me. Terribly important." When he didn't answer and looked stubborn I said, "You can tell *me*. Shucks, I used to have a 'Q' clearance myself. Never suspended, either. It's just that I'm no longer with the government."

"What's a 'Q' clearance?"

I explained and presently he nodded. "You mean an 'Alpha Status.' You must have been hot stuff, boy; I only rated a Beta."

"Then why can't you tell me?"

"Huh? You know why. Regardless of your rated status, you don't have the necessary 'Need to Know' qualification."

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"The hell I don't! 'Need to Know' is what I've got most of."

But he wouldn't budge so finally I said in disgust, "I don't think there is such a thing. I think you just had a belch back up on you."

He stared at me solemnly for a while, then he said, "Danny."

"Huh?"

"I'm going to tell you. Just remember your Alpha Status, boy. I'm going to tell you because it can't hurt anything and I want you to realize that it couldn't possibly be of use to you in your problem. It's time travel, all right, but it's not practical. You can't use it."

"Why not?"

"Give me a chance, will you? They never smoothed the bugs out of it and it's not even theoretically possible that they ever will. It's of no practical value whatsoever, even for research. It's a mere by-product of NullGrav—that's why they classified it."

"But, hell, NullGrav is declassified."

"What's that got to do with it? If this was commercial, too, maybe they'd unwrap it. But shut up."

I'm afraid I didn't, but I'd better tell this as if I had. During Chuck's senior year at the University of Colorado—Boulder, that is—he had earned extra money as a lab assistant. They had a big cryogenics lab there and at first he had worked in that. But the school had a juicy defense contract concerned with the Edinburgh field theory and they had built a big, new physics laboratory in the mountains out of town. Chuck was reassigned there to Professor Twitchell—Dr. Hubert Twitchell, the man who just missed the Nobel Prize and got nasty about it.

"Twitch got the notion that if he polarized around another axis he could reverse the gravitational field instead of leveling it off. Nothing happened. So he fed what he had done back into the computer and got wild-eyed at the results. He never showed them to me, of course. He put two silver dollars into the test cage—they still used hard money around those parts then—after making me mark them. He punched the solenoid button and they disappeared.

"Now that is not much of a trick," Chuck went on. "Properly, he should have followed up by making them reappear out of the nose of a little boy who volunteers to come up on the stage. But he seemed satisfied, so I was—I was paid by the hour.

"A week later one of those cartwheels reappeared. Just one. But before that, one afternoon while I was cleaning up after he had gone home, a guinea pig showed up in the cage. It didn't belong in the lab and I hadn't seen it around before so I took it over to the bio lab on my way home. They counted and weren't short any pigs, although it's hard to be certain

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with guinea pigs, so I took it home and made a pet out of it.

"After that single silver dollar came back Twitch got so worked up he quit shaving. Next time he used two guinea pigs from the bio lab. One of them looked awfully familiar to me but I didn't see it long because he pushed the panic button and they both disappeared.

"When one of them came back about ten days later—the one that didn't look like mine—Twitch knew for sure that he had it. Then the resident O-in-C for the department of defense came around—a chair-type colonel who used to be a professor himself, of botany. Very military type . . . Twitch had no use for him. This colonel swore us both to double-dyed secrecy, over and above our Status oaths. He seemed to think that he had the greatest thing in military logistics since Caesar invented the carbon copy. His idea was that you could send divisions forward or back to a battle you had lost, or were going to lose, and save the day. The enemy would never figure out what had happened. He was crazy in hearts and spades, of course . . . and he didn't get the star he was bucking for. But the 'Critically Secret' classification he stuck on it stayed, so far as I know, right up to the present. I've never seen a disclosure on it."

"It might have some military use," I argued, "it seems to me, if you could engineer it to take a division of soldiers at a time. No, wait a minute, I see the hitch. You always had 'em paired. It would take two divisions, one to go forward, one to go back. One division you would lose entirely . . . I suppose it would be more practical to have a division at the right place at the right time in the first place."

"You're right but your reasons are wrong. You don't have to use two divisions, or two guinea pigs, or two anything. You simply have to match the masses. You could use a division of men and a pile of rocks that weighed as much. It's an action-reaction situation, corollary with Newton's Third Law." He started drawing in the beer drippings again. "*MV* equals *mv* . . . the basic rocketship formula. The cognate time-travel formula is *MT* equals *mt*."

"I still don't see the hitch. Rocks are cheap."

"Use your head, Danny. With a rocketship you can aim the kinkin' thing. But which direction is last week? Point to it. Just try. You haven't the slightest idea which mass is going back and which one is going forward. There's no way to orient the equipment."

I shut up. It would be embarrassing to a general to expect a division of fresh shock troops and get nothing but a pile of gravel. No wonder the ex-prof never made brigadier. But Chuck was still talking:

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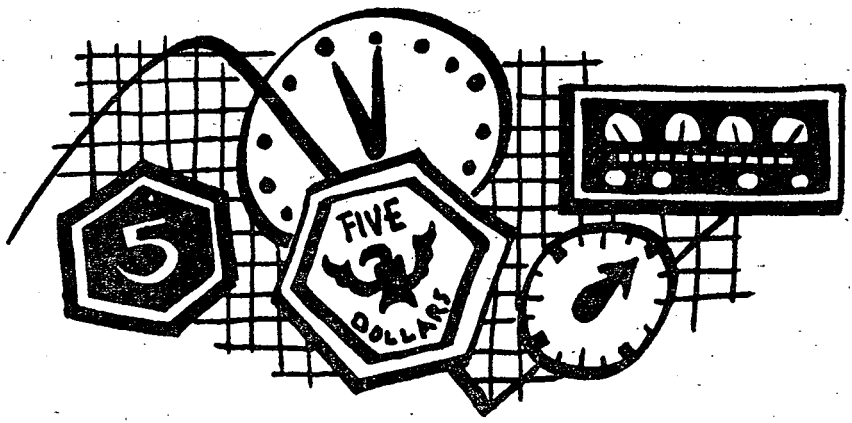

"You treat the two masses like the plates of a condenser, bringing them up to the same temporal potential. Then you discharge them on a damping curve that is effectively vertical. *Smack!*—one of them heads for the middle of next year, the other one is history. But you never know which one. But that's not the worst of it; you can't come back."

"Huh? Who wants to come back?"

"Look, what use is it for research if you can't come back? Or for commerce? Either way you jump, your money is no good and you can't possibly get in touch with where you started. No equipment—and believe me it takes equipment and power. We took power from the Arco reactors. Expensive . . . that's another drawback."

"You could get back," I pointed out, "with cold-sleep."

"Huh? *If* you went to the past. You might go the other way; you never know. *If* you went a short enough time back so that they had cold-sleep . . . no farther back than the War. But what's the point of that? You want to know something about 1980, say, you ask somebody or you look it up in old newspapers. Now if there was some way to photograph the Crucifixion . . . But there isn't. Not possible. Not only couldn't you get back, but there isn't that much power on the globe. There's an inverse-square law tied up in it, too."

"Nevertheless, some people would try it just for the hell of it. Didn't anybody ever ride it?"

Chuck glanced around again. "I've talked too much already."

"A little more won't hurt."

"I think three people tried it. I *think*. One of them was an instructor. I was in the lab when Twitch and this bird, Leo Vincent, came in; Twitch told me I could go home. I hung around outside.

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After a while Twitch came out and Vincent didn't. So far as I know, he's still in there. He certainly wasn't teaching at Boulder after that."

"How about the other two?"

"Students. They all three went in together; only Twitch came out. But one of them was in class the next day whereas the other one was missing for a week. Figure it out yourself."

"Weren't you ever tempted?"

"Me? Does my head look flat? Twitch suggested that it was almost my duty, in the interests of science, to volunteer. I said, no thanks; I'd take a short beer instead . . . but that I would gladly throw the switch for him. He didn't take me up on it."

"I'd take a chance on it. I could check up on what's worrying me . . . and then come back again by cold-sleep. It would be worth it."

Chuck sighed deeply. "No more beer for you, my friend; you're drunk. You didn't listen to me. *One—*" He started making tallies on the table top. "—you have no way of knowing that you'd go back; you might go forward instead."

"I'd risk that. I like now a lot better than I liked then; I might like thirty years from now still better."

"OK, so take the Long Sleep again; it's safer. Or just sit tight and wait for it to roll around; that's what I'm going to do. But quit interrupting me. *Two,* even if you did go back, you might miss 1970 by quite a margin. So far as I know, Twitch was shooting in the dark; I don't think he had it calibrated. But of course I was just the flunky. *Three,* that lab was in a stand of pine trees and it was built in 1980. Suppose you come out ten years before it was built in the middle of a western yellow pine? Ought to make quite an explosion, about like a cobalt bomb, huh? Only you wouldn't know it."

"But— As a matter of fact, I don't see why you would come out anywhere near the lab. Why not to the spot in outer space corresponding to where the lab used to be—I mean where it was . . . or rather—"

"You don't mean anything. You stay on the world line you were on and stay right there. Don't worry about the math; just remember that that guinea pig *did.* But if you got back before the lab was built, maybe you wind up in a tree. *Four,* how could you get back to now even with cold-sleep, even if you did go the right way, arrive at the right time, and live through it?"

"Huh? I did once, why not twice?"

"Sure. But what are you going to use for money?"

I opened my mouth and closed it. That one made me feel foolish.

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I had had the money once; I had it no longer. Even what I had saved (not nearly enough) I could not take with me—shucks, even if I robbed a bank (an art I knew nothing about) and took a million of the best back with me, I couldn't spend it in 1970. I'd simply wind up in jail for trying to shove funny money. They had even changed the shape, not to mention serial number, dates, colors, and designs. "Maybe I'd just have to save it up."

"Good boy. And while you were saving it, you'd probably wind up here-and-now again without half trying . . . but minus your hair and your teeth."

"OK, OK. But let's go back to that last point. Was there ever a big explosion on that spot? Where the lab was?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Then I *wouldn't* wind up in a tree—because I *didn't*. Follow me?"

"I'm three jumps ahead of you. The old time paradox again, only I won't buy it. I've thought about theory of time, too, maybe more than you have. You've got it just backwards. There wasn't any explosion and you aren't going to wind up in a tree . . . because *you aren't ever going to make the jump*. Do *you* follow *me?*"

"But suppose I did?"

"You won't. Because of my fifth point. It's the killer, so listen closely. You ain't about to make any such jump because the whole this is classified and you *can't*. They won't let you. So let's forget it, Danny. It's been a very interesting intellectual evening and the FBI will be looking for me in the morning. So let's have one more round and Monday morning if I'm still out of jail I'll phone the chief engineer over at Aladdin and find out the first name of this other D. B. Davis character and who he was or is. He might even be working there and, if so, we'll have lunch with him and talk shop. I want you to meet Springer, the chief over at Aladdin, anyway; he's a good boy. And forget this time travel nonsense; they'll never get the bugs out of it. I should never have mentioned it . . . and if you ever say I did, I'll look you square in the eye and call you a liar. I might need my classified status again some day."

So we had another beer. By the time I was home and had taken a shower and had washed some of the beer out of my system I knew he was right. Time travel was about as practical a solution to my difficulties as cutting your throat to cure a headache. More important, Chuck would find out what I wanted to know from Mr. Springer just over chops and a salad, no sweat, no expense, no risk. And I liked the year I was living in.

When I climbed into bed I reached out and got the week's stack of papers. The *Times* came to me by tube each morning, now

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that I was a solid citizen. I didn't read it very much, because whenever I got my head soaked full of some engineering problem, which was usually, the daily fripperies you find in the news merely annoyed me, either by boring me or worse still by being interesting enough to distract my mind from its proper work.

Nevertheless I never threw out a newspaper until I had at least glanced at the headlines and checked the vital statistics column, the latter not for births, deaths, and marriages, but simply for "withdrawals," people coming out of cold sleep. I had a notion that someday I would see the name of some one I had known, back then, and then I would go around and say hello, bid him welcome, and see if I could give him a hand. The chances were against it, of course, but I kept on doing it and it always gave me a feeling of satisfaction.

I think that subconsciously I thought of all other Sleepers as my "kinfolk," the way anybody who once served in the same outfit is your buddy, at least to the extent of a drink.

There wasn't much in the papers, except the ship that was still missing between here and Mars, and that was not news but a sad lack of it. Nor did I spot any old friends among the newly-awakened Sleepers. So I lay back and waited for the light to go out.

About three in the morning I sat up very suddenly, wide awake. The light came on and I blinked at it. I had had a very odd dream, not quite a nightmare but nearly, of having failed to notice little Ricky in the vital statistics.

I knew I hadn't. But just the same when I looked over and saw the week's stack of newspapers still sitting there I was greatly relieved; it had been possible that I had stuffed them down the chute before going to sleep, as I sometimes did.

I dragged them back onto the bed and started reading the vital statistics again. This time I read all categories, births, deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, changes of name, commitments, and withdrawals, for it had occurred to me that my eye might have caught Ricky's name without consciously realizing it while glancing down the column to the only subhead I was interested in—Ricky might have got married, or had a baby, or something.

I almost missed what must have caused the distressing dream. It was in the *Times* for May 2, 2001, Tuesday's withdrawals listed in Wednesday's paper: "Riverside Sanctuary . . . F. V. Heinicke."

F. V. Heinicke!

Heinicke was Ricky's grandmother's name . . . I knew it, I was *certain* of it! I didn't know *why* I knew it. But I felt that it had been buried in my head and

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had not popped up until I read it again. I had probably seen it or heard it at some time, from Ricky or Miles, or it was even possible that I had met the old gal at Sandia. (Though I had the nagging feeling—a sort of *déjà vu* again—that I had seen the name quite recently, in some other connection.) No matter, the name, seen in the *Times,* had fitted a forgotten piece of information in my brain and then I *knew.*

Only I still have to prove it. I had to make sure that "F. V. Heinicke" stood for "Frederica Virginia Heinicke."

I was shaking with excitement, anticipation, and fear. In spite of well-established new habits I tried to zip my clothes instead of sticking the seams together and made a botch of getting dressed. But a few minutes later I was down in the hall, where the phone booth was—I didn't have an instrument in my room, or I would have used it; I was simply a supplementary listing for the house phone. Then I had to run back up again, when I found that I had forgotten my phone-credit ID card—I was really disorganized.

Then, when I had it, I was trembling so that I could hardly fit it into the slot. But I did and signaled "Service."

"Circuit desired?"

"Uh, I want the Riverside Sanctuary. That's in Riverside Borough."

"Searching . . . holding . . . circuit free. We are signaling."

The screen lighted up at last and a man looked grumpily at me. "You must have the wrong phasing. This is the Sanctuary. We're closed for the night."

I said, "Hang on, *please.* If this is the Riverside Sanctuary, you're just who I want."

"Well, what do you want?"

"You have a client there, F. V. Heinicke, a new withdrawal. I want to know—"

He shook his head. "We don't give out information about clients over the phone. And certainly not in the middle of the night. You'd better call after ten o'clock. Better yet, come here."

"I will, I will. But I want to know just one thing. What do the initials *F. V.* stand for?"

"I told you that—"

"Will you *listen,* please? I'm not just butting in; I'm a Sleeper myself. Sawtelle. Withdrawn just lately. So I know all about the 'confidential relationship' and what's proper. Now you've already published this client's name in the paper. You and I both know that the sanctuaries always give the papers the full names of clients withdrawn and committed . . . but the papers trim the given names to initials to save space. Isn't that true?"

He thought about it. "Could be."

"Then what possible harm is there in telling me what the initials stand for?"

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He hesitated still longer. "None, I guess, if that's all you want. It's all you're going to get. Hold on."

He passed out of the screen, was gone for what seemed like an hour, came back holding a card. "The light's poor," he said, peering at it. 'Frances—no, 'Frederica . . . Frederica Virginia.' "

My ears roared and I almost fainted. "Thank God!"

"You all right?"

"Yes. Thank you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Yes, I'm all right."

"Hmm. I guess there's no harm in telling you one more thing. It might save you a trip. She's already checked out."

IX

I could have saved time by hiring a cab to jump me to Riverside but I was handicapped by lack of cash. I was living in West Hollywood; the nearest twenty-four hour bank was downtown at the Grand Circle of the Ways. So first I rode the Ways downtown and went to the bank for cash. One real improvement I had not appreciated up to then was the universal checkbook system; with a single cybernet as clearing house for the whole city and radioactive coding on my check book I got cash laid in my palm as quickly there as I could have gotten it at my home bank across from Hired Girl, Inc.

Then I caught the express Way for Riverside. When I reached the Sanctuary it was just daylight.

There was nobody there but the night technician I had talked to and his wife, the night nurse. I'm afraid I didn't make a good impression. I had a day's beard, I was wild-eyed, I probably had a beer breath, and I had not worked out a consistent framework of lies.

Nevertheless Mrs. Larrigan, the night nurse, was sympathetic and helpful. She got a photograph out of file and said, "Is this your cousin, Mr. Davis?"

It was Ricky. There was no doubt about it, it was Ricky! Oh, not the Ricky I had known, for this was not a little girl but a mature young woman, twentyish or older, with a grown-up hairdo and a grown-up and very beautiful face. She was smiling.

But her eyes were unchanged and the ageless pixie quality of her face that had made her so delightful a child was still there. It was the same face, matured, filled out, grown beautiful, but unmistakable.

The stereo blurred, my eyes had filled with tears. "Yes," I managed to choke. "Yes. That's Ricky."

Mr. Larrigan said, "Nancy, you shouldn't have showed him that."

"Pooh, Hank, what harm is there in showing a photograph?"

"You know the rules." He turned to me. "Mister, as I told you on the phone, we don't give

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out information about clients. You come back here at ten o'clock when the administration office opens."

"Or you could come back at eight," his wife added. "Dr. Bernstein will be here then."

"Now, Nancy, you just keep quiet. If he wants information, the man to see is the Director. Bernstein hasn't any more business answering questions than we have. Besides, she wasn't even Bernstein's patient."

"Hank, you're being fussy. You men like rules just for the sake of rules. If he's in a hurry to see her, he could be in Brawley by ten o'clock." She turned to me. "You come back at eight. That's best. My husband and I can't really tell you anything anyhow."

"What's this about Brawley? Did she go to Brawley?"

If her husband had not been there I think she would have told me more. She hesitated and he looked stern. She answered, "You see Dr. Bernstein. If you haven't had breakfast, there's a real nice place just down the street."

So I went to the "real nice place" (it was) and ate and used their washroom and bought a tube of Beardgo from a dispenser in the washroom and a shirt from another dispenser and threw away the one I had been wearing. By the time I returned I was fairly respectable.

But Larrigan must have bent Dr. Bernstein's ear about me. He was a young man, resident in training, and he took a very stiff line. "Mr. Davis, you claim to be a Sleeper yourself. You must certainly know that there are criminals who make a regular business of preying on the gullibility and lack of orientation of a newly-awakened Sleeper. Most Sleepers have considerable assets, all of them are unworldly in the world in which they find themselves, they are usually lonely and a bit scared—a perfect set up for confidence men."

"But all I want to know is where she went! I'm her cousin. But I took the Sleep before she did, so I didn't know she was going to."

"They usually claim to be relatives." He looked at me closely. "Haven't I seen you before?"

"I strongly doubt it. Unless you just happened to pass me on the Ways, downtown." People are always thinking they've seen me before; I've got one of the Twelve Standard Faces, as lacking in uniqueness as one peanut in a sackful. "Doctor, how about phoning Dr. Albrecht at Sawtelle Sanctuary and checking on me?"

He looked judicial. "You come back and see the Director. He can call the Sawtelle Sanctuary . . . or the police, whichever he sees fit."

So I left. Then I may have made a mistake. Instead of coming back to see the Director and very possibly getting the exact information I needed (with the aid of Albrecht's vouching for me) I hired

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a jumpcab and went straight to Brawley.

It took three days to pick up her trail in Brawley. Oh, she had lived there and so had her grandmother; I found that out quickly. But the grandmother had died twenty years earlier and Ricky had taken the Sleep. Brawley is a mere hundred thousand compared with the seven million of Great Los Angeles; the twenty-year old records were not hard to find. It was the trail less than a week old that I had trouble with.

Part of the trouble was that she was with some one; I had been looking for a young woman traveling alone. When I found out she had a man with her I thought anxiously about the crooks preying on Sleepers that Bernstein had lectured me about and got busier than ever.

I followed a false lead to Calexico, went back to Brawley, started over, picked it up again, and traced them as far as Yuma.

At Yuma I gave up the chase, for Ricky had gotten married. What I saw on the register at the county clerk's office there shocked me so much that I dropped everything and jumped a ship for Denver, stopping only to mail a card to Chuck telling him to clear out my desk and pack the stuff in my room.

I stopped in Denver just long enough to visit a dental supply house. I had not been in Denver since it had become the Capital—after the Six Weeks War Miles and I had gone straight to California—and the place stunned me. Why, I couldn't even find Colfax Avenue. I had understood that everything essential to the government was buried back under the Rockies. If that is so, then there must be an awful lot of non-essentials still above ground; the place seemed even more crowded than Great Los Angeles.

At the dental supply house I bought ten kilograms of gold, isotope 197 in the form of 14-gauge wire. I paid $86.10 a kilogram for it, which was decidedly too much, since gold of engineering quality was selling for around $70/Kg, and the transaction mortally wounded my only $1,000 bill. But engineering gold comes either in alloys never found in nature, or with isotopes 196 and 198 present, or both, depending on the application. For my purposes, I wanted fine gold, undetectable from gold refined from natural ore, and I did not want gold that might burn my pants off if I got cozy with it—the overdose at Sandia had given me a healthy respect for radiation poisoning.

I wound the gold wire around my waist and went to Boulder. Ten kilograms is about the weight of a well-filled weekend bag and that much gold bulks almost exactly the same as a quart of milk.

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But the wire form of it made it bulk more than it would have solid; I can't recommend it as a girdle. But gold slugs would have been still harder to carry and this way it was always with me.

Dr. Twitchell was still living there, though no longer working; he was professor emeritus and spent most of his waking hours in the bar of the faculty club. It took me four days to catch him in another bar, since the faculty club was closed to outlanders like me. But when he did it turned out to be easy to buy him a drink.

He was a tragic figure in the classic Greek meaning: a great man—a *very* great man—gone to ruin. He should have been up there with Einstein and Bohr and Newton; as it was, only a few specialists in field theory were really aware of the stature of his work. Now when I met him his brilliant mind was soured with disappointment, dimmed with age, and soggy with alcohol. It was like visiting the ruins of what had been a magnificent temple after the roof has fallen in, half the columns knocked down and vines grown over it all.

Nevertheless, he was brainier on the skids than I ever was at my best. I'm smart enough myself to appreciate real genius when I meet it.

The first time I saw him he looked up, looked straight at me and said, "You again."

"Sir?"

"You used to be one of my students, didn't you?"

"Why, no, sir, I never had that honor." Ordinarily when people think they have seen me before, I brush it off; this time I decided to exploit it if I could. "Perhaps you are thinking of my cousin, Doctor —class of '86. He studied under you at one time."

"Possibly. What did he major in?"

"He had to drop out without a degree, sir. But he was a great admirer of yours. He never missed a chance to tell people he had studied under you."

You can't make an enemy by telling a mother her child is beautiful. Dr. Twitchell let me sit down and presently let me buy him a drink. The greatest weakness of the glorious old wreck was his professional vanity. I had salvaged part of the four days before I could scrape up an acquaintance with him by memorizing everything there was about him in the university library, so I knew what papers he had written, where he had presented them, what earned and honorary degrees he held, and what books he had written. I had tried one of the latter, but I was already out of my depth on page nine, although I did pick up a little patter from it.

I let him know that I was a camp follower of science myself; right at present I was researching for a book: *Unsung Geniuses.*

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"What's it going to be about?"

I admitted diffidently that I thought it would be appropriate to start the book with a popular account of his life and works . . . provided he would be willing to relax a bit from his well-known habit of shunning publicity. I would have to get a lot of my material from him of course.

He thought it was claptrap and could not think of such a thing. But I pointed out that he had a duty to posterity and he agreed to think it over. By the next day he simply assumed that I was going to write his biography—not just a chapter, a whole book. From then on he talked and talked and talked and I took notes . . . real notes; I did not dare try to fool him by faking, as he sometimes asked me to read back.

But he never mentioned time travel.

Finally I said, "Doctor, isn't it true that if it had not been for a certain colonel who was once stationed here you would have had the Nobel Prize hands down?"

He cursed steadily for three minutes, with magnificent style. "Who told you about him?"

"Uh, Doctor, when I was doing research writing for the Department of Defense—I've mentioned that, haven't I?"

"No."

"Well, when I was, I heard the whole story from a young Ph.D. working in another section. He had read the report and he said it was perfectly clear that you would be the most famous name in physics today . . . if you had been permitted to publish your work."

"Hrrmph! That much is true."

"But I gathered that it was classified . . . by order of this Colonel, uh, Plushbottom."

"Thrushbotham. Thrushbotham, sir. A fat, fatuous, flatulent, footkissing fool incompetent to find his hat with it nailed to his head."

"It seems a great pity."

"What is a pity, sir? That Thrushbotham was a fool? That was nature's doing, not mine."

"It seems a pity that the world should be deprived of the story. I understand that you are not allowed to speak of it."

"Who told you that? I say what I please!"

"That was what I understood, sir . . . from my friend in the Department of Defense."

"Hrrrmph!"

That was all I got out of him that night. It took him a week to decide to show me his laboratory.

Most of the building was now used by other researchers, but his time laboratory he had never surrendered, even though he did not use it now; he fell back on its classified status and refused to let anyone else touch it, nor had he permitted the apparatus to be torn down. When he let me in, the place smelled like a vault that has not been opened in years.

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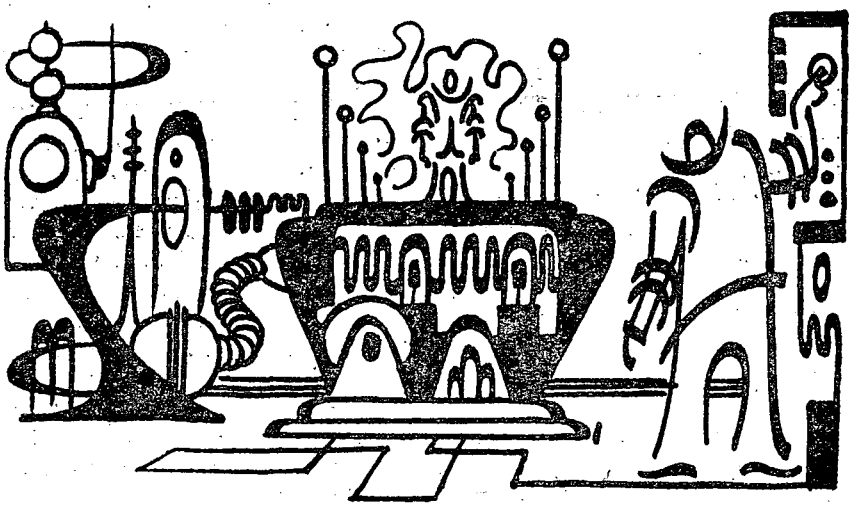
He had had just enough drinks not to give a damn, not so many but what he was still steady. His capacity was pretty high. He lectured me on the mathematics of time theory and temporal displacement (he didn't call it "time travel"), but he cautioned me not to take notes. It would not have helped if I had, as he would start a paragraph with *"It is therefore obvious . . ."* and go on from there to matters which may have been obvious to him and God, but to no one else.

When he slowed down I said, "I gathered from my friend that the one thing you had not been able to do was to calibrate it? That you could not tell the exact magnitude of the temporal displacement?"

"What? Poppycock! Young man, if you can't measure it, it's not science." He bubbled for a bit, like a teakettle, then went on, "Here. I'll *show* you." He turned away and started making adjustments. All that showed of his equipment was what he called the "temporal locus stage"—just a low platform, with a cage around it—and a control board which might have served for a steam plant or a low pressure chamber. I'm fairly sure I could have studied out how to handle the controls had I been left alone to examine them, but I had been told sharply to stay away from them. I could see an eight-point Brown recorder, some extremely heavy-duty solenoid-actuated switches, and a dozen other equally familiar components, but it didn't mean a thing without the circuit diagrams.



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He turned back to me and demanded, "Have you any change in your pocket?"

I reached in and hauled out a handful. He glanced at it and selected two $5 pieces, mint new, the pretty green plastic hexagonals issued just that year. I could have wished that he had picked half fives, as I was running low.

"Do you have a knife?"

"Yes, sir."

"Scratch your initial on them."

I did so. He then had me place them side by side on the stage. "Note the exact time. I have set the displacement for exactly one week, plus-or-minus six seconds."

I looked at my watch. Dr. Twitchell said, "Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . . *now!*"

I looked up from my watch. The coins were gone. I didn't have to pretend that my eyes bugged out. Chuck had told me about a similar demonstration—but seeing it was another matter.

Dr. Twitchell said briskly, "We will return here one week from tonight and wait for one of them to reappear. As for the other one—you saw both of them on the stage? You placed them there yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was I?"

"At the control board, sir." He had been a good fifteen feet from the nearest part of the cage around the stage and had not approached it since.

"Very well. Come here." I did so and he reached into a pocket. "Here's one of your bits. You'll get the other back a week from now." He handed me a green $5 coin; it had my initials on it.

I did not say anything because I can't talk very well with my jaw sagging loosely. He went on, "Your remarks last week disturbed me. So I visited this place on Wednesday, something I have not done for—oh, more than a year. I found this coin on the stage, so I knew that I had been . . . *would be* . . . using the equipment again. It took me until tonight to decide to demonstrate it to you."

I looked at the coin and felt it. "This was in your pocket when we came here tonight?"

"Certainly."

"But how could it be both in your pocket and my pocket at the same time?"

"Good Lord, man, have you no eyes to see with? No brain to reason with? Can't you absorb a simple fact simply because it lies outside your dull existence? You fetched it here in your pocket tonight—and we kicked into last week. You saw. A few days ago I found it here. I placed it in my pocket. I fetched it here tonight. The same coin . . . or to be precise, a later segment of its space-time structure, a week more worn, a week more dulled—but what the canaille would call the 'same' coin. Although no more identical in fact

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than is a baby identical with the man the baby grows into. Older."

I looked at it. "Doctor . . . push me back in time by a week."

He stared angrily. "Out of the question!"

"Why not? Won't it work with people?"

"Eh? Certainly it will work with people."

"Then why not do it? I'm not afraid. And think what a wonderful thing it would be for the book . . . if I could testify *of my own knowledge* that the Twitchell time displacement works."

"You *can* report it of your own knowledge. You just saw it."

"Yes," I admitted slowly, "but I won't be believed. That business with the coins . . . I saw it and I believe it. But anyone simply reading an account of it would conclude that I was gullible, that you had hoaxed me with some simple legerdemain."

"Damn it, sir!"

"That's what *they* would say. They wouldn't be able to believe that I actually had seen what I reported. But if you were to ship me back just a week, then I could report of my own knowledge—"

"Sit down. Listen to me." He sat down but there was no place for me to sit, although he did not seem aware of it. "I *have* experimented with human beings, long ago. And for that reason, I resolved never to do it again."

"Why? Did it kill them?"

"What? Don't talk nonsense." He looked at me sharply, added, "You are not to put this in the book."

"As you say, sir."

"Some minor experiments showed that living subjects could make temporal displacements without harm. I had confided in a colleague, a young fellow who taught drawing and other matters in the school of architecture. Really more of an engineer than a scientist but I liked him; his mind was alive. This young chap—it can't hurt to tell you his name: Leonard Vincent—was wild to try it . . . really try it; he wanted to undergo major displacement, five hundred years. I was weak. I let him."

"Then what happened?"

"How should I know? Five hundred years, man! I'll never live to find out."

"But you think he's five hundred years in the future?"

"Or the past. He might have wound up in the fifteenth century. Or the twenty-fifth. The chances are precisely even. There's an indeterminacy—symmetrical equations. I've sometimes thought . . . no, just a similarity in names."

I didn't ask what he meant by this, because I suddenly saw the similarity, too, and my hair stood on end. Then I pushed it out of my mind; I had other problems. Besides, a chance similarity was all it could be—a man could not get from Colorado to Italy, not in the fifteenth century.

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"But I resolved not to be tempted again. It wasn't science, it added nothing to the data. If he was displaced forward, well and good. But if he was displaced backwards . . . then possibly I sent my friend to be killed by savages."

Or even possibly, I thought, to become a "Great White God." I kept the thought to myself. "But you needn't use so long a displacement with me."

"Let's say no more about it, if you please, sir."

"As you wish, Doctor." But I couldn't drop it. "Uh, may I make a suggestion?"

"Eh? Speak up."

"We could get almost the same result by a rehearsal."

"What do you mean?"

"A complete dry run, with everything done just exactly as if you were intending to displace a living subject—I'll act out that part. We'll do everything precisely as if you meant to displace me, right up to the point where you would push that button. Then I'll understand the procedure . . . which I don't quite, as yet."

He grumbled a little, but he really wanted to show off his toy. He weighed me and set aside metal weights just equal to my 170 pounds. "These are the same scales I used with poor Vincent."

Between us we placed them on one side of the stage. "What temporal setting shall we make?" he asked. "This is your show."

"Uh, you said that it could be set accurately?"

"I said so, sir. Do you doubt it?"

"Oh, no; no! Well, let's see, this is the twenty-fourth of May—suppose we . . . how about, uh, say thirty-one years, three weeks, one day, seven hours, thirteen minutes, and twenty-five seconds?"

"A poor jest, sir. When I said 'accurate' I meant 'accurate to better than one part in one hundred thousand.' I have had no opportunity to calibrate to one part in nine hundred million."

"Oh. You see, Doctor, how important an exact rehearsal is to me, since I know so little about it. Uh, suppose we call it thirty-one years and three weeks. Or is that still too finicky?"

"Not at all. The maximum error should not exceed two hours." He made his adjustments. "You can take your place on the stage."

"Is that all?"

"Yes. All but the power. I could not actually make this displacement with the line voltage I used on those coins. But since we aren't actually going to do it, that doesn't matter."

I looked disappointed, and was. "Then you don't actually have what is necessary to produce such a displacement? You were speaking theoretically?"

"Confound it, sir, I was not speaking theoretically."

"But if you don't have the power . . . ?"

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"I can get the power, if you insist. Wait." He went to a corner of the lab and picked up a phone. It must have been installed when the lab was new; I hadn't seen one like it since I was awakened. There followed a brisk conversation with the night superintendent of the university's power house. Dr. Twitchell was not dependent on profanity; he could avoid it entirely and be more biting than most real artists can be when using plainer words. "I am not in the least interested in your opinions, my man. Read your instructions. I have full facilities whenever I wish them. Or can you read? Shall we meet with the President at ten tomorrow morning and have him read them to you? Oh? So you *can* read? Can you write as well? Or have we exhausted your talents? Then write this down: Emergency full power across the bus bars of the Thornton Memorial Laboratory in exactly eight minutes. Repeat that back."

He replaced the instrument. "People!"

He went to the control board, made some changes, and waited. Presently, even from where I stood inside the cage, I could see the long hands of three sets of meters swing across their dials and a red light come on at the top of the board. "Power," he announced.

"Now what happens?"

"Nothing."

"That's just what I thought."

"What do you mean?"

"What I said. Nothing would happen."

"I'm afraid I don't understand you. I hope I don't understand you. What I meant is that nothing would happen unless I closed this pilot switch. If I did, you would be displaced precisely thirty-one years three weeks."

"And I still say nothing would happen."

His face grew dark. "I think, sir, you are being intentionally offensive."

"Call it what you want to. Doctor, I came here to investigate a remarkable rumor. Well, I've investigated it. I've seen a control board with pretty lights on it; it looks like a set for a mad scientist in a grabbie spectacular. I've seen a parlor trick performed with a couple of coins. Not much of a trick, by the way, since you selected the coins yourself and told me how to mark them; any parlor magician could do better. I've heard a lot of talk. But talk is cheap. What you claim to have discovered is impossible. By the way, they know that, down at the department. Your report wasn't suppressed; it's simply filed in the screwball file. They get it out and pass it around now and then, for a laugh."

I thought the poor old boy was going to have a stroke, there and then. But I had to stimulate him by the only reflex he had left, his vanity.

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"Come out of there, sir. Come out. I'm going to thrash you. With my bare hands I'm going to thrash you."

The rage he was in I think he might have managed it, despite age and weight and physical condition. But I answered, "You don't scare me, Pappy. That dummy button doesn't scare me either. Go ahead and push it."

He looked at me, looked at the button, but still he didn't do anything. I snickered and said, "A hoax, just as the boys said it was. Twitch, you're a pompous old faker, a stuffed shirt. Colonel Thrushbotham was right."

That did it.

His finger stabbed the button.

(To be concluded)

Don't miss next month's F&SF, with the final installment of THE DOOR INTO SUMMER, *which returns Dan Davis to 1970 (and to Ricky and the incomparable Pete) where problems old and new combine in a dazzling display of time-paradox logic.*

Coming Next Month

Our December issue, on the stands around the first of November, leads off with an unusually powerful novelet of space and wonder by Damon Knight, *Stranger Station,* and closes with one of the most off-trail and compelling stories that even Theodore Sturgeon has written, *And Now the News . . .* In between you'll find the first of a delightful series of humorous yet realistic tales of lunar exploration by Arthur C. Clarke, the first published story by Jane Roberts, one of F&SF's most attractive discoveries, reprints by Mildred Clingerman and Anthony Boucher, Charles Beaumont's quarterly column on *The Science Screen*—and of course the exciting final installment of Robert A. Heinlein's THE DOOR INTO SUMMER.

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Lullaby for a Changeling

Magic and spell
  You must make, dark child,
Through two-fold years
  On your pathway wild.

By daylight polish
  The pan and pot;
In halflight curtsy
  Where corpses rot,

And as a pupil
  Listen to bone;
Attune your ear
  To eloquent stone,

Learning to mingle
  The sweat of lust
With the cool gray snow
  That was Helen's dust.

For you must creep
  From your bridal bed
To keep your tryst
  With a lover dead,

To wear the jewel
  A queen once hid,
While you lie with a lad
  In the Pyramid.

Then pregnant and potent
  Wander afar
When time flows colored
  Out of a star,

Never recalling
  Woman nor man;
Witch babe, witch babe
  Since time began.

DORIS P. BUCK

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October is the Fantasy-Month, the Bradbury-Month, the month culminating in the great American fantasy festival of Halloween, when old rites are new-observed in half-believing mockery. So here is a special October story; like Mildred Clingerman's well-remembered The Word *(F&SF, November, 1953), it is a gentle, humorously tender story of a girl who meets a space-visitant on Halloween — and how odd it is that the two stories can be accurately described in the same words when they have nothing in common . . . save the ancient charm of October.*

Flying Pan

by ROBERT F. YOUNG

MARIANNE SUMMERS WORKED IN A frying pan factory. For eight hours every day and for five days every week she stood by a production line conveyor and every time a frying pan went by she put a handle on it. And all the while she stood by one conveyor she rode along on another—a big conveyor with days and nights over it instead of fluorescent tubes, and months standing along it instead of people. And every time she passed a month it added something to her or took something away, and as time went by she became increasingly aware of the ultimate month—the one standing far down the line, waiting to put a handle on her soul.

Sometimes Marianne sat down and wondered how she could possibly have gotten into such a rut, but all the while she wondered she knew that she was only kidding herself, that she knew perfectly well why. Ruts were made for untalented people, and if you were untalented you ended up in one; moreover, if you were untalented and were too stubborn to go home and admit you were untalented, you stayed in one.

There was a great deal of difference between dancing on TV and putting handles on frying pans: the difference between being graceful and gawky, lucky and unlucky, or —to get right back to the basic truth again—the difference between being talented and untalented. No matter how hard you practiced or how hard you tried, if your legs were too fat, no one wanted you and you ended up in a rut or in a

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frying pan factory, which was the same thing, and you went to work every morning and performed the same tasks and you came home every night and thought the same thoughts, and all the while you rode down the big conveyor between the merciless months and came closer and closer to the ultimate month that would put the final touches on you and make you just like everybody else. . . .

Mornings were getting up and cooking breakfasts in her small apartment and taking the bus to work. Evenings were going home and cooking lonely suppers and afterwards TV. Weekends were writing letters and walking in the park. Nothing ever changed and Marianne had begun to think that nothing ever would . . .

And then one night when she came home, she found a flying frying pan on her window ledge.

It had been a day like all days, replete with frying pans, superintendents, boredom, and tired feet. Around ten o'clock, the maintenance man stopped by and asked her to go to the Halloween Dance with him. The Halloween Dance was a yearly event sponsored by the company and was scheduled for that night. So far, Marianne had turned down fifteen would-be escorts.

A frying pan went by and she put a handle on it. "No, I don't think so," she said.

"Why?" the maintenance man asked bluntly.

It was a good question, one that Marianne couldn't answer honestly because she wasn't being honest with herself. So she told the same little white lie she had told all the others: "I—I don't like dances."

"Oh." The maintenance man gave her the same look his fifteen predecessors had given her, and moved on. Marianne shrugged her shoulders. I don't care *what* they think, she told herself. Another frying pan went by, and another and another.

After a while, noon came, and Marianne and all the other employees ate frankfurters and sauerkraut in the company cafeteria. The parade of frying pans recommenced promptly at 12:30.

During the afternoon she was approached twice more by would-be escorts. You'd have thought she was the only girl in the factory. Sometimes she hated her blue eyes and round pink face, and sometimes she even hated her bright yellow hair, which had some of the properties of a magnet. But hating the way she looked didn't solve her problems, it only aggravated them, and by the time 4:30 came she had a headache and she heartily despised the whole world.

Diminutive trick-or-treaters were already making the rounds when she got off the bus at the corner. Witches walked and goblins leered, and pumpkin candles sputtered in

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the dusk. But Marianne hardly noticed.

Halloween was for children, not for an embittered old woman of twenty-two who worked in a frying pan factory.

She walked down the street to the apartment building and picked up her mail at the desk. There were two letters, one from her mother, one from—

Marianne's heart pounded all the way up in the elevator and all the way down the sixth floor corridor to her apartment. But she forced herself to open her mother's letter first. It was a typical letter, not essentially different from the last one. The grape crop had been good, but what with the trimming and the tying and the disking and the horse-shoeing, and paying off the pickers, there wasn't going to be much left of the check—if and when it came; the hens were laying better, but then, they always did whenever egg prices dropped; Ed Olmstead was putting a new addition on his general store (it was high time!); Doris Hickett had just given birth to a 7 lb. baby boy; Pa sent his love, and please forget your foolish pride and come home. P.S.—Marianne should see the wonderful remodeling job Howard King was doing on his house. It was going to be a regular palace when he got done.

Marianne swallowed the lump in her throat. She opened the other letter with trembling fingers:

Dear Marianne,

I said I wasn't going to write you any more, that I'd already written you too many times asking you to come home and marry me and you never gave me an answer one way or the other. But sometimes a fellow's pride don't amount to much.

I guess you know I'm remodeling the house and I guess you know the reason why. In case you don't it's the same reason I bought the house in the first place, because of you. I only got one picture window and I don't know whether I should put it in the parlor or in the kitchen. The kitchen would be fine, but all you can see from there is the barn and you know how the barn looks, but if I put it in the parlor the northwest wind would be sure to crack it the first winter though you'd get a good view of the road and the willows along the creek. I don't know what to do.

The hills behind the south meadow are all red and gold the way you used to like them. The willows look like they're on fire. Nights I sit on the steps and picture you coming walking down the road and stopping by the gate and then I get up and walk down the path and I say, "I'm glad you've come back, Marianne. I guess you know I still love you." I guess if anybody ever heard me they'd think I was crazy because the road is always empty when I get there, and there's no one ever standing by the gate.

Howard

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There had been that crisp December night with the sound of song and laughter intermingling with the crackling of the ice beneath the runners and the chug chugging of the tractor as it pulled the hay-filled sleigh, and the stars so bright and close they touched the topmost branches of the silhouetted trees, and the snow, pale and clean in the starlight, stretching away over the hills, up and up, into the first dark fringe of the forest; and herself, sitting on the tractor with Howard instead of in the hay with the rest of the party, and the tractor lurching and bumping, its headbeams lighting the way over the rutted country road—

Howard's arm was around her and their frosty breaths blended as they kissed. "I love you Marianne," Howard said, and she could see the words issuing from his lips in little silvery puffs and drifting away into the darkness, and suddenly she saw her own words, silver too, hovering tenuously in the air before her, and presently she heard them in wonderous astonishment: "I love you too, Howie. I love you too. . . ."

She didn't know how long she'd been sitting there crying before she first became aware of the ticking sound. A long time, she guessed, judging by the stiffness of her limbs. The sound was coming from her bedroom window and what it made her think of most was the common pins she and the other kids used to tie on strings and rig up so they'd keep swinging against the windowpanes of lonely old people sitting alone on Halloween.

She had lit the table lamp when she came in, and its beams splashed reassuringly on the living room rug. But beyond the aura of the light, shadows lay along the walls, coalesced in the bedroom doorway. Marianne stood up, concentrating on the sound. The more she listened the more she doubted that she was being victimized by the neighborhood small fry: the ticks came too regularly to be ascribed to a pin dangling at the end of a string. First there would be a staccato series of them, then silence, then another series. Moreover, her bedroom window was six stories above the street and nowhere near a fire escape.

But if the small fry weren't responsible for the sound, who was? There was an excellent way to find out. Marianne forced her legs into motion, walked slowly to the bedroom doorway, switched on the ceiling light and entered the room. A few short steps brought her to the window by her bed.

She peered through the glass. Something gleamed on the window ledge but she couldn't make out what it was. The ticking noise had ceased and traffic sounds drifted up from below. Across the way, the warm rectangles of windows made precise patterns in the

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darkness, and down the street a huge sign said in big blue letters: SPRUCK'S CORN PADS ARE THE BEST.

Some of Marianne's confidence returned. She released the catch and slowly raised the window. At first she didn't recognize the gleaming object as a flying saucer; she took it for an upside down frying pan without a handle. And so ingrained was the habit by now that she reached for it instinctively, with the unconscious intention of putting a handle on it.

"Don't touch my ship!"

That was when Marianne saw the spaceman. He was standing off to one side, his diminutive helmet glimmering in the radiance of SPRUCK'S CORN PADS. He wore a gray, form-fitting space suit replete with ray guns, shoulder tanks, and boots with turned up toes, and he was every bit of five inches tall. He had drawn one of the ray guns (Marianne didn't know for sure they were ray guns, but judging from the rest of his paraphernalia, what else could they be?) and was holding it by the barrel. It was clear to Marianne that he had been tapping on the window with it.

It was also clear to Marianne that she was going, or had gone, out of her mind. She started to close the window—

"Stop, or I'll burn you!"

Her hands fell away from the sash. The voice had seemed real enough, a little on the thin side, perhaps, but certainly audible enough. Was it possible? Could this tiny creature be something more than a figment?

He had changed his gun to his other hand, she noticed, and its minute muzzle pointed directly at her forehead. When she made no further move, he permitted the barrel to drop slightly and said: "That's better. Now if you'll behave yourself and do as I say, maybe I can spare your life."

"Who are you?" Marianne asked.

It was as though he had been awaiting the question. He stepped dramatically into the full radiance of the light streaming through the window and sheathed his gun. He bowed almost imperceptibly, and his helmet flashed like the tinsel on a gum wrapper. "Prince Moy Trehano," he said majestically, though the majesty was marred by the thinness of his voice, "Emperor of 10,000 suns, Commander of the vast spacefleet which is at this very moment in orbit around this insignificant planet you call 'Earth'!"

"Wh—why?"

"Because we're going to bomb you, that's why!"

"But why do you want to bomb us?"

"Because you're a menace to galactic civilization! Why else?"

"Oh," Marianne said.

"We're going to blow your cities to smithereens. There'll be so much death and destruction in our wake

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that you'll never recover from it . . . Do you have any batteries?"

For a moment Marianne thought she had misunderstood. "Batteries?"

"Flashlight batteries will do." Prince Moy Trehano seemed embarrassed, though it was impossible to tell for sure because his helmet completely hid his face. There was a small horizontal slit where, presumably, his eyes were but that was the only opening. "My atomic drive's been acting up," he went on. "In fact, this was a forced landing. Fortunately, however, I know a secret formula whereby I can convert the energy in a dry cell battery into a controlled chain reaction. Do you have any?"

"I'll see," Marianne said.

"Remember now, no tricks. I'll burn you right through the walls with my atomic ray gun if you try to call anyone!"

"I—I think there's a flashlight in my bed table drawer."

There was. She unscrewed the base, shook out the batteries and set them on the window sill. Prince Moy Trehano went into action. He opened a little door on the side of his ship and rolled the batteries through. Then he turned to Marianne. "Don't you move an inch from where you are!" he said. "I'll be watching you through the viewports." He stepped inside and closed the door.

Marianne held her terror at bay and peered at the spaceship more closely. They aren't really flying *saucers* at all, she thought; they're just like frying pans . . . flying, frying pans. It even had a little bracket that could have been the place where the handle was supposed to go. Not only that, its ventral regions strongly suggested a frying pan cover.

She shook her head, trying to clear it. First thing you knew, everything she saw would look like a frying pan. She remembered the viewports Prince Moy Trehano had mentioned, and presently she made them out—a series of tiny crinkly windows encircling the upper part of the saucer. She leaned closer, trying to see into the interior—

"Stand back!"

Marianne straightened up abruptly, so abruptly that she nearly lost her kneeling position before the window and toppled back into the room. Prince Moy Trehano had re-emerged from his vessel and was standing imperiously in the combined radiance of the bedroom light and SPRUCK'S CORN PADS.

"The technical secrets of my stellar empire are not for the likes of you," he said. "But as a recompense for your assistance in the repairing of my atomic drive I am going to divulge my spacefleet's target areas.

"We do not contemplate the complete destruction of humanity. We wish merely to destroy the present civilization, and to accomplish this

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it is our intention to wipe out every city on Earth. Villages will be exempt, as will small towns with populations of less than 20,000 humans. The bombings will begin as soon as I get back to my fleet—a matter of four or five hours—and if I do not return, they will begin in four or five hours anyway. So if you value your life, go ho— I mean leave the city at once. I, Prince Moy Trehano, have spoken!"

Once again the bow, and the iridescing of the tinselly helmet, and then Prince Moy Trehano stepped into the spaceship and slammed the door. A whirring sound ensued, and the vessel began to shake. Colored lights went on in the viewports—a red one here, a blue one there, then a green one—creating a Christmas-tree effect.

Marianne watched, entranced. Suddenly the door flew open and Prince Moy Trehano's head popped out. "Get back!" he shouted. "Get back! You don't want to get burned by the jets, do you?" His head disappeared and the door slammed again.

Jets? Were flying saucers jet-propelled? Even as she instinctively shrank back into her bedroom, Marianne pondered the question. Then, as the saucer rose from the window ledge and into the night, she saw the little streams of fire issuing from its base. They were far more suggestive of sparks from a Zippo lighter than they were of jets, but if Prince Moy Trehano had said they were jets, then jets they were. Marianne was not inclined to argue the point.

When she thought about the incident afterwards she remembered a lot of points that she could have argued—if she'd wanted to. Prince Moy Trehano's knowledge of the English language, for one, and his slip of the tongue when he started to tell her to go home, for another. And then there was the matter of his atomic drive. Certainly, Marianne reflected later, if the bombs his fleet was supposed to have carried were as technically naive as his atomic drive, the world had never had much to worry about.

But at the moment she didn't feel like arguing any points. Anyway, she was too busy to argue. Busy packing. Under ordinary circumstances Prince Moy Trehano's threatened destruction of the cities of Earth would never have been reason enough to send her scurrying to the sticks. But Lord, when you were so sick of the pinched little channels of blue that city dwellers called a sky, of the disciplined little plots of grass that took the place of fields, of bored agents who sneered at you just because you had fat legs; when, deep in your heart, you wanted an excuse to go home—then it was reason enough.

More than enough.

At the terminal she paused long enough to send a telegram:

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DEAR HOWIE: PUT THE PICTURE WINDOW IN THE KITCHEN, I DON'T MIND THE BARN. WILL BE HOME ON THE FIRST TRAIN.

MARIANNE

When the lights of the city faded into the dark line of the horizon, Prince Moy Trehano relaxed at the controls. His mission, he reflected, had come off reasonably well.

Of course there had been the inevitable unforeseen complication. But he couldn't blame anyone for it besides himself. He should have checked the flashlight batteries before he swiped them. He knew well enough that half the stock in Olmstead's general store had been gathering dust for years, that Ed Olmstead would rather die than throw away anything that some unwary customer might buy. But he'd been so busy rigging up his ship that he just hadn't thought.

In a way, though, his having to ask Marianne's help in the repairing of his improvised motor had lent his story a conviction it might otherwise have lacked. If he'd said right out of a clear blue sky that his "fleet" was going to bomb the cities and spare the villages, it wouldn't have sounded right. Her giving him the batteries had supplied him with a motivation. And his impromptu explanation about converting their energy into a controlled chain reaction had been a perfect cover-up. Marianne, he was sure, didn't know any more about atomic drives than he did.

Prince Moy Trehano shifted to a more comfortable position on his match box pilot's seat. He took off his tinfoil helmet and let his beard fall free. He switched off the Christmas-tree lights beneath the Saran Wrap viewports and looked out at the village-bejeweled countryside.

By morning he'd be home, snug and secure in his miniature mansion in the willows. First, though, he'd hide the frying pan in the same rabbit hole where he'd hidden the handle, so no one would ever find it. Then he could sit back and take it easy, comforted by the knowledge of a good deed well done—and by the happy prospect of his household chores being cut in half.

A witch went by on a broom. Prince Moy Trehano shook his head in disgust. Such an outmoded means of locomotion! It was no wonder humans didn't believe in witches any more. You had to keep up with the times if you expected to stay in the race. Why, if he were as old-fashioned and as antiquated as his contemporaries he might have been stuck with a bachelor for the rest of his life, and a shiftless bachelor—when it came to housework, anyway—at that. Not that Howard King wasn't a fine human; he was as fine as they came. But you never got your

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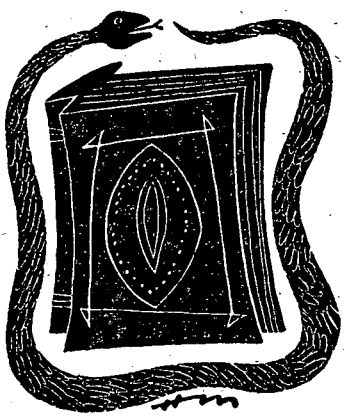
dusting and your sweeping done mooning on the front steps like a sick calf, talking to yourself and waiting for your girl to come home from the city.

When you came right down to it, you *had* to be modern. Why, Marianne wouldn't even have *seen* him, to say nothing of hearing what he'd had to say, if he'd worn his traditional clothing, used his own name, and employed his normal means of locomotion. Twentieth century humans were just as imaginative as eighteenth and nineteenth century humans: they believed in creatures from black lagoons and monsters from 20,000 fathoms and flying saucers and beings from outer space—

But they didn't believe in brownies. . . .



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It's good to have G. Harry Stine in this Heinlein-dominated issue; Stine is a friend of Heinlein's, a fellow enthusiast (and respectful understander) of cats, and a successful Heinlein disciple in fiction, adult and juvenile, under the pseudonym of "Lee Correy." Retaining his born name for non-fiction, Mr. Stine — who has more firsthand knowledge of the beginnings of space-flight than any other s.f. writer — offers a few entertaining footnotes on rocketry which may shatter an illusion or two.

The Truth of the Matter

by G. HARRY STINE

PICK UP A SCIENCE FICTION STORY dealing with rockets or space travel, and you will undoubtedly find a sequence which reads something like this:

Captain Smurch settled into his couch pads and ran the final checks on his controls. The 300-foot spaceship Ballustrade *was ready to go. "All stations report!" he rasped.*

"Radar ready!"

"Power plant ready!"

"Green light from traffic control, sir!" snapped the radioman.

"Very well! All chambers full thrust! RAISE SHIP!" *the order came from Smurch.*

Now undoubtedly this is taking place in the far, *far* future when mechanical devices—and rockets in particular—have become as reliable and commonplace as a bottle of soft drink. I say this, remembering that science fiction prides itself on telling a probable, realistic story of the future, because it just ain't so yet, bud. And it isn't going to be that easy for a long time to come.

Nor is our gallant Captain Smurch going to be totally nonchalant about the whole works, sitting back and quietly smoking a cigarette while automatic equipment does the job of getting a rocket off the ground.

Why? Because mechanical devices and rockets have a certain amount of innate cussedness to them—they all seem to have cunning little minds of their own—and because human beings will always remain human beings. For a good long time to come, automatic gadgets will get into trouble and tear themselves to pieces because

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the malfunction won't let them shut themselves off. This happens today with teletypes, washing machines, back-geared lathes, and huge electronic computers. Machines are pretty stupid at this point in their development.

And human beings, still the smartest things around, will continue to do the wrong things at the right time, the right things at the wrong time, foul up, goof off, make mistakes, forget, and act downright stupid when they know better. Science fiction very rarely concerns itself with the problems of men and their machines these days, the gadget story being pretty well dead. Some good material for gadget stories is still lying around untouched, but the mere fact that said material concerns illogical things that *just couldn't happen* makes them ineligible for fiction.

Let's talk about the spacemen of science fiction, since we got off on that tangent to start with. A space pilot of the future is usually flawless and imperturbable, physically fit to the *n*th degree, with a staggering technical background and competence, and with reflexes as fast as light.

Now there are no spacemen yet, but a lot of people are working with rockets; and, if you will stretch the point a little bit, these same types of people will probably be the ones working with spaceships when the time comes. And if some of the "goofs" and situations of these rocket men have any counterpart in the future, spaceflight isn't going to be as simple and easy as it seems. We'll do it, all right, but it won't be like driving to town for groceries.

Consider some of the oft-told tales around White Sands Proving Ground—which is where I happen to work and therefore the place about which I can talk most intelligently.

When it comes to firing a rocket, no matter what kind, there are a million little things to check before firing, all of which must be working perfectly. Communications, working in an already crowded spectrum, sometimes conk out. Gadgets, of which there are thousands, decide they don't want to work today. People have trouble getting trucks or have a flat tire. On top of all this—and more—there is the rocket itself. A rocket in the development stage still has bugs in it, which is why it is still being tested. Perhaps it's unfair to compare them to the future spaceships. But even the old German V-2's, of which approximately 5000 were produced on assembly lines, had their share of troubles.

The last of the V-2's was scheduled to be fired in late September, 1952. Bob Heinlein and Jack Williamson both came down to watch it go as a sort of a tribute to the passing of an era. On the morning it was to be fired shortly after dawn, we drove out to White

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Sands over the dark, cold desert, found a vantage point at a camera station just to the east of the blockhouse, and settled down to wait for the firing. Clyde Tombaugh showed up, too, so the wait was not a complete waste of time while the four of us sat around discussing Mars. Everything seemed to be going well and on schedule . . . until the count-down got to X-minus 45 minutes. Later we learned the following dialogue had taken place at the launcher:

"OK, the peroxide is in. Bring around the liquid oxygen truck."

"Funny, but it should be here. I don't see it anywhere."

"Call the camp and find out where it is."

The man did so, and got the answer, "What liquid oxygen truck?"

Liquid oxygen for the V-2's was shipped in railroad tank cars to El Paso where big insulated trucks loaded up to transport the frigid stuff to White Sands. In the rush and tension of getting the last V-2 ready to go, nobody thought to order the essential oxidizer that the rocket *had* to have to fly!

The liquid oxygen was promptly ordered, and the last V-2 flew the next day. At least, it made a game try at flying. One of the rocket engineers made the statement, "According to my calculations, this bird should go like a bomb if it gets past the critical resonance point at 26.4 seconds." At that time in its flight, the V-2 was scheduled to slam through sonic speed.

At that precise moment during its flight, the last V-2 hit the critical resonance point, shook loose some piping in the motor, exploded, and scattered itself all over the sky in little bitty pieces. The end of an era.

Stories of V-2's are rampant at White Sands, even though it has been four years since the last one was fired. By far the best story of them all is told about "Pappy" White, the GE field supervisor at White Sands when General Electric was firing the V-2's as part of the Hermes Project. Pappy was one of those wonderful personalities who helped give White Sands its fine reputation as the rocket capital of the world. He knew rockets and has probably fired more big rockets than any man in this country. But V-2 #55 was almost his undoing.

Pappy used to stand between the firing console and the blockhouse window, calling commands for pre-stage and main stage. He was in that position when he fired #55. Pre-stage went fine, so Pappy called for main stage.

The plugs fell free, main stage came on, and the noise in the blockhouse rose to the point where nobody could hear anything but the rocket. #55 didn't get off the ground right away, but built up thrust slowly and jittered or waltzed around on the launching

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table. This motion caused some of the pins on the electrical plugs at the base of the rocket to short together. And high voltage got into the nose-cone blow-off explosives —a ring of prima-cord and four blocks of TNT. They went off.

Pappy, being close to the window, was the only man in the blockhouse who saw it. He hit the floor. There were about two dozen people in there and, when they saw Pappy hit the floor, they decided as one that the floor was the place to be. The story has it that there wasn't room for another prostrate body on that floor, and that people practically fought to feel the linoleum.

Then Pappy got up for a cautious look . . . and everybody followed suit. At that instant, the four tons of alcohol in the rocket exploded . . . and Pappy went down again, followed by everyone else. This jack-in-the-box routine involving more than a score of men happened four times in all while the peroxide tanks exploded, the rocket fell over on its side with another mighty bang, and the area became a sea of flames. Afterwards, a lot of people felt downright silly. That blockhouse has walls which are ten feet thick, and it is designed to withstand the direct impact of a V-2 falling from 100 miles altitude. But Pappy was an old-timer; and when he ducked, everybody else decided it was high time they ducked, too.

There are other stories about Pappy. He picked up a dog somewhere, just a mongrel. But unless that dog was in the blockhouse for a firing, the whole crew felt apprehensive . . . because, as the fates would have it, the rockets never flew very well if that mutt wasn't there.

Pappy was on Operation Sandy where the V-2 was fired off the deck of the carrier *Midway*. That rocket didn't do very well, either; it got off at an angle and cleared the island superstructure by a matter of feet. Pappy has a certificate which qualifies him as capable of digging a foxhole in a steel deck.

If you think it's funny, you haven't been in that position. It doesn't take very long to gain a healthy respect for rockets, as the men at White Sands found out at a very early date. On one of the first V-2 firings, people stood around the firing area to watch it. But it got into the air and went wild, shedding fins and huge hunks of skin. One man took off on a dead run while holding a field telephone; he was reminded of the fact in a very sudden and positive manner when the slack in the cord took up and dumped him flat on his back. Another man tore up his clothes and scratched himself trying to climb through a barbed-wire fence; in his undeterred haste, he did not notice an open gate three feet away.

Photographers still get up close

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when the big ones go, so everyone else now considers them, humorously, either daft in the haid or "expendable." None of them have been hurt, and not one of them has ever left his camera. Even when V-2 #55 blew up, an unsung photographer remained at his movie camera and got the pictures that showed what happened. But occasionally an outsider in the photo business gets initiated with the full treatment. Such was the case when a group of newsreel photographers from Hollywood showed up, making a production of the whole thing and striding around with the attitude that they were the only ones who knew how to make a photograph. It was a V-2, and it went wild in the air over their heads. They, in turn, headed for parts unknown in great haste, abandoning their equipment. Everybody else assumed that the malfunction of the rocket hadn't been in their script.

When you stop to consider the thousands and thousands of parts in a rocket and its system—which includes ground equipment—you wonder why the doggone things fly at all . . . which is why spacemen are going to be plagued with unending grief because the spaceships aren't going to be any simpler. Reliability of parts, you say? OK, you've got a gadget with 1000 vacuum tubes in it, and each tube is guaranteed to have an average life of 5000 hours. How long can you run without a tube failure? 12 minutes at a time, bud! And people are not infallible either, although they're built to last a lifetime. Not even when instruction manuals give step-by-step pictorialized data on how to run a test. With all good intentions, a checkout crew once plugged a missile's power supply into the 110-volt AC power line; the fact that the circuits in the bird ran on 28-volts DC caused them to replace several hundred vacuum tubes. Somebody is always forgetting to load film in cameras or recorders, and the old stunt of leaving the lens caps on a tracking telescope has been pulled so many times that it isn't funny any more.

The radar people who track a rocket in flight have their own brand of grief, since their complex equipment is just as susceptible to equipment and human failure as anything else. There are several exclusive clubs among these boys, and membership in them is not aspired to. To get into one club, you must accidentally lock on the blockhouse, which never moves, instead of the missile. Members of the "Booster Club" don't boast the fact that they are something like a Chamber of Commerce; they've pulled the magnificent error of going into automatic track on a booster instead of the missile. Once a missile flew up behind the power lines serving the station . . . whereupon the radars locked on

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the power lines and just sat there quivering while the missile went on its merry way. As a safety factor, rockets carry small radar beacons which retransmit the signals from a tracking radar and thus enable the radar operators to track the small target to a greater distance. But a radar beacon is no guarantee of good radar data, not when a man unknowingly leans on the radar's high-voltage, sees the signal disappear, and yells, "Beacon off!"

By far the most classic goof in firing a missile is one where a radar man who was responsible for tracking the bird in flight called in to ask the X-time; it just so happened that the missile had not only been fired, but had impacted as well. Running a close second was the occasion where a project director called the range controller to request a reschedule of a missile for that afternoon; the range controller denied the request because he could plainly see the missile burning on the launcher.

Any rocket man will contest these, claiming another goof is the most classic. And it is sometimes heartening to realize that other places and other businesses have their own particular troubles, too. This is not because people are basically stupid; it is because they are human beings. Under tension, working hard, staying up all night trouble-shooting a balky piece of gear, being subjected to the whims of the weather, and having to deal with other people in a large and complex operation covering 4000 square miles, it is no wonder that the rocket men of White Sands make mistakes occasionally.

All of which serves to point out that the truth of the whole matter is something entirely different from the fictional representation. Not knowing much more about spaceships than the next man at the present time, I'd still venture a real prediction that troubles will be manifest and grow into the same sort of legendary yarns as those of rocketry.

And probably the cry of, "Hold! Holding on X-minus 60 seconds!" will be more common than, "Raise ship!"

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Mr. Dickson, who can write any and every type of future fiction, from subtle mood-pieces through rousing adventure to outright farce, here turns his attention to one of s.f.'s more neglected branches: the courtroom drama of interstellar law. Serious fiction of the 1950's has found The Trial a valuable technical device for the analysis of contemporary society and character; Dickson proves it equally useful for the study of the future in this illuminating and outrageous trial transcript.

Zeepsday

by GORDON R. DICKSON

TRANSCRIPT:

TRIAL 47 Court Session 19238472-6354028475635 of the Galactic Court of People's Manners, within the Federation of Planet-Originated Races.

RECORDER:

This trial record by Aki, brood-brother of Po, Domsker from Ju, graduate court reporter. Recorded in accordance with reportorial precept—"Let it be a full record; let no least spuggl twung unnoticed and unremarked.".

RECORD BEGINS:

Two ulbls (four hours, twenty minutes, Human time; 38 Gisnk, Sloonian time) after sunrise on Beldor, Galactic Court World. A blithe day with the courtroom well filled with polite audience, of many varieties of goodly life forms. To the left of the Judge's bench, the compound of the defendant, one Garth Paulson, a Human from Earth, surrounded by friends and well-wishers. To the right, the compound of the plaintiff, Drang Usussis, a Nesbler from Sloon, similarly surrounded by friends and well-wishers. Approach of his honor, the presiding judge, Umka, a Bolver from Bol, is noted.

COURT BAILIFF: His honor, Judge Umka, now rolling upon his bench. All those fearing offense to personal and delicate sensibilities are warned to retire.

JUDGE: Thank you, Bailiff. You may scurry off now. Where is my scanner—ah, yes, I see here by the legal challenge submitted to me that the plaintiff charges the defendant with having committed a personal and verbal impoliteness

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upon the plaintiff, specifically the defendant's audible reference to the plaintiff upon one occasion as a being possessing four tentacles. Ah—um—do these three dozen old eyes deceive me? It seems to the bench from here that the plaintiff in question does indeed seem to be possessed of f—

MYSELF *(interrupting in accordance with legalized tradition and duty of court reporters on such occasions)*: Psst, your honor—*(the rest of my words off the record)*.

JUDGE: Oh—ah. Thank you, clerk. The bench extends its courtesies to the *three*-tentacled Mr. Ususis and the purchasing press agent—is that correct?—Mr. Paulson.

DEFENDANT: Press agent is correct, your honor. I am the city purchasing press agent for the city hall of the City of Los Angeles in the Metropolis of Los Angeles, Earth.

JUDGE: And Mr. Ususis. Your occupation?

MR. USUSSIS: Your honor, I am a registered dilettante, of the planet of Sloon, long may its purple oceans reek.

JUDGE *(pounding for order)*: Order! Order! The court will not permit patriotic outbursts of this sort. The plaintiff is cautioned that the sensibilities of those here present may not be offended. Mr. Usussis, this is a challenge of a minor nature you have brought before this court, but it seems to the bench that your compound is well-peopled by legal talent of the highest order. And is not that the great criminal legalist, Spod Draxel of Nv, I see beside you?

MR. USUSSIS: It is indeed, your honor. However, he and these other gentlebeings are merely present as friends and well-wishers of the plaintiff and in no official capacity. I shall attempt to prosecute my case with my own feeble talents.

JUDGE *(turning to defendant)*: And you, Mr. Paulson, seem equally well supplied. Is not that Earth's foremost Corporation Sharpie I see in your compound?

DEFENDANT: It is indeed Sol Blitnik, your honor. However, as is the case with the honorable plaintiff, he and these others are merely chance acquaintances who have prevailed on me for a seat in my compound the better to amuse themselves with witnessing this trial. I, also, will defend myself to the best of my poor ability.

JUDGE: Very well. The bench cautions both plaintiff and defendant against extraneous issues. We will proceed. Will the plaintiff take the stand and submit to questioning?

(The plaintiff slithers across the floor and mounts the stand.)

JUDGE: Will the defendant open the action of his response to the challenge of the plaintiff?

(The defendant consults with the chance acquaintances in his compound.)

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DEFENDANT: We—that is, I think, your honor, that it would save time and trouble if the plaintiff were to commence by stating his cause of offense briefly in his own words, for the court's benefit.

JUDGE: It is so ordered. Go ahead, Mr. Ususis.

PLAINTIFF: The occasion was actually a simple one, your honor. I was transacting a minor piece of business with the defendant at the time. We had just signed a contract for the purchase of certain Sloonian commodities recently become in high demand in the city of Los Angeles, when the defendant suddenly began to scratch himself vigorously. When I inquired politely what was the matter, he replied, "Now I get it. I should have known better than to trust a slippery customer like you, you—" and here, your honor, he made use of that obscene, disgusting, and unmentionable accusation against myself which is the reason for my present action against him in this court.

JUDGE: Allow me to interrupt for a moment. The bench would like to know whether the plaintiff is seeking punitive action in this case, or merely an injunction restraining the defendant from further verbal assault?

PLAINTIFF: Your honor, I want an injunction backed up by a threat of punitive action to the full rigor of the law—a two-year sentence, I believe.

JUDGE *(severely)*: The plaintiff is warned against attempting to instruct the bench. A two-year sentence is, indeed, possible for a breach of politeness between races. However, the sentencing and conditions of sentence are up to the court.

PLAINTIFF *(humbly)*: I apologize, your honor.

JUDGE: Your apology is accepted. *(turning to defendant)*: It seems that the plaintiff has adequately stated the situation at the time of the alleged insult. What does the defendant wish—by the way, will the defendant explain to the bench why his chance acquaintance Sol Blitnik has adopted a position with his lips almost touching the defendant's ear?

DEFENDANT: I humbly beg the court to excuse my infirmities. The ear in question has a slight itch which is eased by Mr. Blitnik's murmuring into it from time to time.

JUDGE: That's all right, Mr. Paulson. I was merely curious. Proceed.

DEFENDANT: Is the plaintiff aware that the city of Los Angeles is identical with the Metropolis of Los Angeles?

PLAINTIFF: I am, naturally.

DEFENDANT: And that the cities of Cairo, Hong Kong and Capetown are suburbs of the same Metropolis of Los Angeles?

PLAINTIFF: Well—I—uh—

WELL-WISHER *(from the plaintiff's compound)*: Objection!

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JUDGE: Order in the court! Spectators will not interrupt court proceedings.

PLAINTIFF: Your honor, *I* object.

JUDGE: On what grounds?

PLAINTIFF: Er—the question is immaterial and irrelevant.

JUDGE: How about that, Mr. Paulson?

DEFENDANT: Your honor, I am trying to show that the plaintiff was attempting to mislead the court when he referred to the business between us as minor and that that business has a direct bearing on the conversation which culminated in the offense alleged.

JUDGE: Objection overruled. Continue, Mr. Paulson—by the way how does your ear feel now? I notice Mr. Blitnik working on it again.

DEFENDANT: Much better, thanks, your honor. Will your honor direct the witness to answer that last question?

JUDGE: Answer the question.

PLAINTIFF: Well, yes, I do.

DEFENDANT: In short, what you have referred to as minor business was actually concerned with millions of units of manufactured items for the planet Earth as a whole. Right?

PLAINTIFF: Well, yes.

DEFENDANT: Your honor, I would now like to call my secretary, Marge Jolman, to the stand.

JUDGE: Very well—you are dismissed, Mr. Usussis. Subject to later recall, if necessary, of course.

(The plaintiff slithers off the stand and back to his compound. From the compound of the defendant approaches a Human female—young, well-developed and red-haired. Slightly nervous, the witness performs a brief version of the Human hand-clasping ceremony with the defendant as he helps her up on the stand.)

PLAINTIFF *(from his own compound):* Your honor, objection!

JUDGE: On what grounds, Mr. Usussis?

PLAINTIFF: This witness is known to be contemplating mating ceremonies with the defendant. I ask your honor to consider the possibility that this may cause her to be prejudiced.

JUDGE: For, or against him, you mean?

PLAINTIFF: For, your honor. Human matings are considered to be on grounds of affection.

JUDGE: Prejudice on grounds of affection or animosity are a practical impossibility for this court to take into account. Otherwise you yourself would have to be disqualified from pleading on the grounds of obvious prejudice, Mr. Usussis. Is there any direct connection between the contemplated mating ceremonies and your charge of impoliteness?

PLAINTIFF: No *direct* connection, your honor, but—

JUDGE: Overruled. Proceed, Mr. Paulson.

DEFENDANT: Marge, do you re-

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member being at work in my outer office the day Mr. Ususis first came to see me?

WITNESS: Oh, yes.

DEFENDANT: Will you tell the court what he said to you on that occasion.

WITNESS: Well, I don't remember his exact words—

DEFENDANT: With your honor's permission, I will ask the witness to tell us the substance of what the plaintiff said to her at that time.

JUDGE: Go ahead. Plaintiff can always object after he hears how she puts it.

DEFENDANT: Go ahead, Marge.

WITNESS: Well, he had an appointment to see Garth—I mean Mr. Paulson, but he hadn't said what about. So I asked him. He said it was about Zeepsday.

JUDGE: Zeepsday? I don't—

MYSELF: Your honor, psst—*(the rest of my words off the record).*

JUDGE: Of course. Naturally. Hrmph! Continue.

WITNESS: I asked him what that was; and he said that was what he had come here to explain and could he see Mr. Paulson about it. I called Garth on the intercom and told him, and he said for both of us to come in.

JUDGE: Just a minute. Has plaintiff any objections so far?

PLAINTIFF: Not at this time, your honor.

DEFENDANT: And what took place in my office, Marge? Will you tell the court that?

WITNESS: Well, you wanted me to take notes, you said. So I stayed. Then you asked Mr. Ususis what it was all about. And he said it was a delicate matter and he didn't want to step on the toes of any human taboos he might not know about. But what was the reason no humans made use of Zeepsday?

(The witness pauses and seems flustered).

JUDGE *(encouragingly)*: Go ahead, Miss Jolman.

WITNESS: Well, Garth said, "What do you mean, Zeepsday?" and then Mr. Ususis explained that he didn't know the human word for it, but it was the day that came between the days we called Wednesday and Thursday.

JUDGE: Just a minute. I think that this is a point that ought to be clarified before we go any further. I think the witness can step down for a moment. Is there a temporal authority in the courtroom? —No, no, I don't want an expert from either the plaintiff's or the defendant's compound, disinterested as those gentlebeings may be. I want one from the courtroom audience. You sir—there in the back—would you consent?

(A Vbuldo from O rises in the back of the courtroom and clanks forward to the stand.)

JUDGE: Will you tell us your name and qualifications, sir?

WITNESS: Gladly. I am Porniarsk Prime Three and have advanced degrees in temporals general.

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JUDGE: Will you explain in the simplest possible terms the temporal situation under consideration, here?

WITNESS: With pleasure. The plaintiff, being a Nesbler from Sloon, is native to a Stress Two area of the Galaxy. As a result, he is particular to a curvilinear time with a factor of .84736209, approximately. The temporal quantity being radial to space curvature, it results in a greater positive number of temporal divisions to the same temporal area for one from Nesbler than for one from Earth, where an alinear time with a factor of .76453839476, approximately, is in present effect.

JUDGE: And the practical result of this—?

WITNESS: That the plaintiff has a total of eight days in his week for seven of the defendant's. In short, the days Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Zeepsday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

JUDGE: Thank you. You are dismissed.

(*The witness bows, descends from the stand and clanks back to his seat in the audience section of the courtroom.*)

JUDGE: Recall the previous witness.

(*The Human female Marge Jolman reascends the stand.*)

JUDGE: Miss Jolman, you have heard the last witness. Was this, in essence, what Mr. Usussis told you and the defendant?

WITNESS: Yes, your honor. He wanted to know what we humans did during the twenty-four hours between midnight Wednesday and the first minute of Thursday morning.

JUDGE: Do you mean to imply that the plaintiff intimated his belief that Humans also had eight days in their week?

WITNESS: That's what it sounded like, your honor.

JUDGE: Hmm—well, go on with your questioning, Mr. Paulson.

DEFENDANT: Thank you, your honor. Now, Marge, what did I say when Mr. Usussis said that?

WITNESS: You didn't believe it. And Mr. Usussis offered to show you.

DEFENDANT: Thank you. That's all.

JUDGE: Cross-examine, Mr. Usussis?

PLAINTIFF: Not at this time, your honor.

JUDGE: You may step down.

(*Witness returns to seat in defendant's compound.*)

JUDGE: And now, Mr. Paulson?

DEFENDANT: Your honor, I would like to call Gundar Jorgenson, also of Earth, to the stand.

JUDGE: Proceed.

DEFENDANT: Gundar—

(*A middle-aged male Human, large for the species, approaches and mounts the stand.*)

DEFENDANT: Will you tell the court your name and occupation?

WITNESS: Gundar Jorgenson,

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from Earth. I am a temporal physicist.

DEFENDANT: Will you tell the court what your connection is with this case?

WITNESS: I will. One sparkling spring morning last May, the defendant requested me to accompany him on a visit to Zeepsday—

(*Consternation in the court. Cries of* Objection! Objection! *from the plaintiff's compound.*)

JUDGE *(pounding for order)*: Order! Order in the court! Another outburst like that and I shall clear the courtroom. Will the defendant approach the bench?

DEFENDANT: Here I am, your honor.

JUDGE: Mr. Paulson, I must admit I had my suspicions earlier that in this trial the action was trending toward matters outside—the jurisdiction of this court. Surely the defendant is aware—and if he is not, I am sure any of his chance acquaintances sharing the compound with him at present can enlighten him—that any case concerning temporal illegalities must be considered by the High Crimes Commission. Both planets involved must be sequestered, their native products embargoed, and a hundred-year decontamination process of both parties put into effect. Does the defendant mean to charge the plaintiff with an actual derangement of the temporal structure around his home world?

DEFENDANT: No such thought entered my mind, your honor. As has already been stated, I am merely an inexperienced private citizen engaged in a small altercation with another citizen over a minor matter. As your honor knows, a conviction for the derangement of temporal structure is practically a legal impossibility; and in fact it is for that reason that the High Crimes Commission has seen fit to make the situation so uncomfortable to both the criminal and his victim that both parties, innocent and guilty, would shrink from becoming involved in such a case. Certainly I would not wish to be responsible for bringing such grief upon my world. Consequently, I would like to clear up any doubt in the court's mind about what actually happened, in a temporal sense. It is my theory that none of the temporal irregularities concerned in this trial actually happened; but that those of us who seemed to be concerned with them were actually only hypnotized into believing they had.

JUDGE: Hypnotized! And does the plaintiff agree to admit that he hypnotized the defendant?

PLAINTIFF *(smirking)*: I do, your honor, with the stipulation that the defendant in this case subconsciously wanted to be hypnotized, so that the action cannot be said to have been taken against the defendant's will.

JUDGE: Does the defendant agree to the stipulation?

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DEFENDANT: I do, your honor, provisional to the theoretical nature of my contention.

JUDGE: Does the plaintiff agree to the theoretical nature of the defendant's contention?

PLAINTIFF: In theory I agree to the defendant's theory.

JUDGE *(looking somewhat glazed about the lower two dozen of his eyes, mutters something).*

MYSELF: What was that, your honor?

JUDGE: Nothing—nothing. Continue questioning your witness, Mr. Paulson.

DEFENDANT: Mr. Jorgenson, you were associated with me on our theoretical visit to Zeepsday. Will you tell the court what we did and what we discovered there?

WITNESS: I would be more than glad to. As I said, one balmy May night, we left the common, ordinary Earth behind—

JUDGE: Just a minute, Mr. Paulson. Why do you need a technical expert to testify to the facts of something that theoretically did not happen or exist?

DEFENDANT: I assure your honor, these non-existent facts have a vital bearing on the case.

JUDGE: Well . . . well—continue.

DEFENDANT: Go ahead, Mr. Jorgenson.

WITNESS: We left in a Sloonian spaceship. Earth fell away behind us. At a distance from the world, where the planet seemed to swim like some great clouded crystal ball in emptiness, we waited until 12:00 midnight, Wednesday. Then, at the witching hour, we activated the temporal distorter on the ship—

DEFENDANT: You mean the illusion of a temporal distorter.

WITNESS: Oh, yes. The temp—this illusion, that is—was the largest I had ever seen. My acquaintance with such heretofore had been confined to tiny laboratory models.

JUDGE: Of illusions, or of temporal distorters, Mr. Jorgenson?

WITNESS: Temporal distorters, your honor. Still, I knew the principle on which it worked. Briefly, it dilated an aperture in the normal temporal structure; and through this aperture one may discover any excess time that may be available in the area.

JUDGE: Just a minute. I would like to ask the former technical witness a question. You needn't come up to the stand, Mr. Porniarsk Prime Three; but is this description essentially correct?

VBULDONIAN VOICE *(from the back of the courtroom):* Quite correct, your honor.

JUDGE: Continue, Mr. Jorgenson.

WITNESS: Sure enough, when we landed again on Earth at 00:06 A.M. Zeepsday, we found a deserted planet.

JUDGE: Deserted planet?

WITNESS: Deserted indeed, your honor. The cities, highways and homes of Earth were there as they had always been; but they were un-

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tenanted by a living soul. We stared, amazed. Here was the broad expanse of lands—

JUDGE: Excuse me a minute. Is the witness by any chance an amateur poet or writer?

WITNESS *(with a mild rush of circulatory fluid to the face):* As a matter of fact, I am, in a slight way. How did your honor guess? I've actually published a few minor items in *Literary Frontiers*. Not for money, of course. I don't believe in commercializing my art, but—

JUDGE: The bench applauds the witness's altruism; but perhaps, in these sordid legal chambers, it would be better if the witness restrained himself to ordinary prose.

WITNESS: No place is too sordid for the soul of poetry to enter—

JUDGE *(somewhat grimly):* Perhaps not; but until it is admitted as a witness, it will have to preserve the order of this courtroom by remaining silent. Continue, Mr. Paulson.

DEFENDANT: Go ahead, Mr. Jorgenson.

WITNESS: Well—I mean—anyway, there weren't any people there. I made some tests.

JUDGE: Of this illusion.

WITNESS: Yes, your honor. I had wished to expose a few guinea pigs or hamsters as test subjects first. But it turned out to be unnecessary. As far as my tests could distinguish, this was good, perfectly experienceable time, comparable to Earth's own in every respect.

DEFENDANT: As a result of this experience, what was your conclusion on our return at the end of twenty-four hours to normal Earth Thursday?

WITNESS: It was my conclusion that Earth had an extra day available in every week, of which we humans had been failing to take advantage.

DEFENDANT: Thank you, Mr. Jorgenson. That is all.

JUDGE: Cross-examination, Mr. Usussis?

PLAINTIFF: No cross-examination, your honor. I would like to compliment the witness on his fair testimony to this illusion.

JUDGE: I'm sure the witness is gratified. You may step down, Mr. Jorgenson. Any more witnesses, Mr. Paulson?

DEFENDANT: Your honor, at this point I would like to call myself as a witness—that is, I would like to make a statement for the record and the information of the court.

JUDGE: Is there no other way of bringing this information out, Mr. Paulson? Can't you put someone else on the stand who was present and elicit the information by questioning?

DEFENDANT: Unfortunately not, your honor. I was alone at the time in question.

JUDGE: I am against it. This sort of thing simplifies matters enormously and is against all legal tradition. However, if you must, I suppose you must. Go ahead.

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DEFENDANT: On first discovering and experiencing Zeepsday for myself, I must admit I was overjoyed. Here was a boon for Earth, indeed. One extra day in the week—one extra day to get all those things done that people were never having the time to get done. One extra day for resting, for visiting, for reestablishing family ties. What could the human race not accomplish now? You all know our human record for rapid technological development—

(*Murmers of shocked protest from the courtroom audience*)

JUDGE *(sternly)*: No propaganda, Mr. Paulson. I've already had to warn the plaintiff about that. I don't want to have to speak to either of you again in this regard.

DEFENDANT: Sorry, your honor—I got carried away. As I said, I thought of all the benefits Zeepsday could bring my world. I was enthusiastic. I went to bed that Thursday night happy, having arranged with the plaintiff—who by sheer chance happened to have a friend who is factory comptroller general back on Sloon—to sign a contract the following day for purchase of various useful Sloonian commodities. Such items as nine-day clocks, four hundred and seventeen day calendars, and other items, with last, but not least, the equipment to dilate time sufficiently to make Zeepsday planet-wide on Earth. The next morning, however, I awoke with some doubt in my mind. I thought to myself, as I was brushing my teeth—

(*Wild screech from the back of the courtroom. General consternation as a Daffyd from Lyx is carried out, his petals stiff and rigid in a state of hysterical shock.*)

JUDGE *(pounding)*: Order! Order! This sort of occurrence is taking place far too frequently of late. The bailiff clearly announced at the beginning of this sitting that those who feared offense to personal and delicate sensibilities were warned to retire. The gentle-being from Lyx saw with perfect clarity that the defendant in this case is of a dentate species, and should have foreseen that mention of teeth or chewing might very well enter the discussion. A mature entity should be responsible for his own emotional welfare, and not expect this court to shoulder that burden for him. . . . Continue.

DEFENDANT: As I say, the next morning I found myself, while not exactly at that time suspicious, somewhat more sober in my assessment of the good to come from Zeepsday on Earth. What, I asked myself, about the legal status of this new day? Should it be a holiday or a workday? What would Congress say? How would the labor unions react? What, in particular, would be the position taken by the powerful bloc represented by the votes of school-age children? Would Zeepsday, in short, really prove to be an unmixed blessing?

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JUDGE *(graciously):* Your reflective caution does you credit, Mr. Paulson, if—

DEFENDANT *(with equal graciousness):* I thank your honor. Those were practically the words with which the plaintiff sought to reassure me later on that same day when we met for the signing of the contract.

JUDGE *(sternly)*:—*if,* I was going to say, Mr. Paulson, before you interrupted me, it can be proved. While I, myself, would be inclined to give you the benefit of the doubt in this respect, this is after all a court of law; and we are concerned only with facts. For proper substantiation you should have a witness to your sensible thoughts.

DEFENDANT: As a matter of fact, I have, your honor. Shortly before the plaintiff arrived with his contract, I expressed these same doubts to my secretary. If you will allow me to put Miss Jolman back on the stand—

PLAINTIFF: Objection! The witness in question is in court and has just heard the defendant claim the attitude under scrutiny. How do we know that she will not confuse these recent statements with those the defendant may have made earlier—

(*Murmurs of protest from the audience. Cries of* Shame! *from a Tyrannosauroid Sapiens, who is ejected by the bailiff for disturbing the court.*)

JUDGE: The plaintiff has already been answered concerning the admissibility of the question of prejudice in a witness. May the bench add that it feels no doubt about the competence of this witness. Overruled. Miss Jolman, will you take the stand, please?

(*The witness ascends the stand.*)

JUDGE: Mr. Paulson—

DEFENDANT: Thank you, your honor. Marge—will you tell the court what I said to you?

WITNESS *(tremulously):* I'll never forget it.

DEFENDANT *(clearing throat noisily):* Just the facts, Marge.

WITNESS: I remember every word. "Marge, honey," you said to me, "I wonder if I'm really doing the right thing? You know you have to be tough to be a purchasing press agent, Marge, when billions of interstellar credits of currency depend on your unofficial decision. And I've always been tough. But now I'm starting to wonder. What sort of a world is it going to be for humans here on Earth—for you and me—us, Marge, if this deal goes through? What kind of a world for future generations, with a Zeepsday in it? All of a sudden, that's important to me—" and then you took me in your arms—

DEFENDANT: Please, Marge, just the facts.

WITNESS: "—because of you, Marge," you said, "because I love you." (Witness is suddenly afflicted by a rush of circulatory fluid to the face similar to that which affected

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a previous witness.) And I said, "I love you, too—" and then you asked me to marry you and we talked for a while; and after a while I said, about Zeepsday—you ought to do what you thought was right and then things would be sure to turn out for the best.

DEFENDANT (*mopping brow*): Thank you, Marge. That's all.

(*Spontaneous applause as the witness leaves the stand, quelled by the Judge pounding for order and interrupted by cries of* Objection! *from the Plaintiff*)

JUDGE: Yes, Mr. Usussis?

PLAINTIFF: I demand to know whether the defendant is to be allowed to sway the court by these unfair emotional appeals. I demand—

JUDGE: The bench is *not* swayed. (*adds, sternly*): And I warn you against imputing such a weakness to the bench under pain of being held in contempt of this court. Now, do you wish to examine the witness?

PLAINTIFF: I have no interest in this witness whatsoever.

JUDGE: Yes—or no?

PLAINTIFF (*more subdued*): No, your honor.

JUDGE: Very well. Mr. Paulson?

DEFENDANT: It only remains for me to state that my misgivings were well founded. Shortly after signing the contract, I was to discover that the Zeepsday Mr. Jorgenson and I had been taken to visit was not native Earth time at all, but a deliberately contrived intrusion of Sloonian time into our Earth week—

(*Pandemonium in the courtroom. Cries of* Objection! *from the plaintiff's compound.*)

JUDGE: Order! *Order!* Mr. Usussis, what is it this time?

PLAINTIFF (*excitedly*): The defendant's statement is unsubstantiated, unfair, and unprovable.

DEFENDANT: But it's the truth.

PLAINTIFF: That is beside the point. We have agreed that everything you experienced was nothing more than an illusion. An illusion does not exist. Therefore whether it is truthful or not is irrelevant.

DEFENDANT (*turning to Judge*): And just there, exactly, is my point, your honor. The plaintiff has admitted that everything up to the signing of the contract was based on something that did not exist—

PLAINTIFF: Which does not render the contract null and void—"A commercial agreement shall be binding without respect to its relation to the real universe." Nuggle *vs.* Jwickx, Galactic Court Decision 1328474639475635. You are legally committed to the purchase of twenty quintillions of galactic monetary units worth of goods from Sloon.

DEFENDANT: That I admit, provided the plaintiff wishes to enforce the contract. My point is otherwise. The contract, being a real

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thing with a real existence in its own right, even though the basis of it was non-existent, is unchallengeable. However, the insult for which the plaintiff has brought suit against me, having no real existence of its own, merely a *reported* existence, to be real must have a basis in reality. Since the plaintiff denies the real basis of the insult—to wit, the situation and causes out of which it stemmed—and further denies any physical basis for the insult—that is, the plaintiff insists that he posesses only *three* tentacles—then the insult, having no real basis, has no real existence. In other words, not only was the original insult beyond the authority of this court to punish, but repetitions of this insult would likewise be so. I ask dismissal of the plaintiff's suit on the basis of non-existence of cause.

PLAINTIFF (*wildly*): This is barefaced robbery. He knows that I'd never be accepted by polite society on Sloon again if I permitted myself to be freely insulted. Your honor, he's out to make me tear up the contract by forcing myself to deny having ever been associated with him or it. If you permit him to continue to insult me, I'll have no alternative. I—

JUDGE: Order! The plaintiff will restrain himself! (*Plaintiff subsides with twitching tentacles.*) Now, if the plaintiff wishes to rebut the defendant's contentions, he will do so in a legal manner.

PLAINTIFF (*shakily, but with growing strength and confidence*): Pardon me, your honor. I had forgotten that I had a legal answer at my disposal. The defendant forgets that an injunction need not necessarily show real cause to be granted. *Fear* of insult is sufficient reason for an injunction to be granted enjoining restraint upon one or more parties. Then, if insult occurs and witnesses to it can be found, no further proof is needed. Twingo *vs.* ¼Kud, Galactic Court Decision 1948373847364548-5937. I rest my case.

JUDGE: Any further comment, Mr. Paulson?

DEFENDANT: No, your honor, except to point out that the whole economic system of Earth trembles upon the outcome of this trial—

JUDGE: That has no bearing on this case, which is solely a question of manners and morals between two private parties, irrespective of race or residence. I see no reason to stretch out this hearing, if both parties have concluded their pleadings. It will not be necessary for me to retire to consider my decision, since the law in this case is perfectly clear and allows of only one interpretation and one conclusion. I myself am of course completely impartial and would have nothing but contempt for anyone who might pretend to see behind this trial a clever con game by an unscrupulous being who has seen an opportunity to take advantage

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of a particular current legal condition. But even if I were so uncontemptuous of such a point of view as to share it myself, it would remain my duty to render my decision with the same scrupulosity as if I were an outspoken adherent of that being, be he tentacled or be he not tentacled and regardless of the number of tentacles.

The defendant has presented an ingenious, and perhaps some of the prejudiced among the spectators might say, a gallant structure of logic to show cause why an injunction should not be issued restraining him from insulting the plaintiff in terms of the number of tentacles the plaintiff possesses. The court is forced to admit that he is perfectly correct in his contention that the original insult under the conditions alleged had no real existence. However, the plaintiff's contention that real cause is not necessary to an injunction is also correct. Consequently: Be it ordered by this court that Garth Paulson, Human presently residing on the planet Earth, be restrained from expressing an opinion about the number of tentacles possessed by Drang Usussis, Nesbler of the planet Sloon, where such expression may be construed to be damaging or injurious to the sensibilities of the said Drang Usussis, Nesbler of the planet Sloon. Further, if the said Garth Paulson shall, in defiance of the order of this court, so express such an opinion, be it ordered that he be visited by the full penalty of the law in such cases: to wit confinement for not less than two years in the place or places determined by a person to be appointed by this court, who shall have him in custody. Full expense of both prisoner and custodian to be borne by the plaintiff in this suit. Unka, a Bolver from Bol, decisioning. . . . Clerk, you will provide all interested parties with copies of his decision.

DEFENDANT (*shouting*): Your honor, don't leave the bench! Let go of me, Marge—I know what I'm doing! To hell with the penalty. Listen, Usussis! I don't care what they do to me. You've got four tentacles and you know it—

(*Bloodcurdling scream from the plaintiff. Uproar in the court.*)

DEFENDANT (*shouting more loudly*): —not three, *four!* Everybody knows it; and if you try to come to Earth and enforce that contract you swindled me out of, there isn't a red-blooded human that won't stand up to you, face to face, and point out that *fourth* tentacle. Listen, folks, do you know why he doesn't want to admit to that fourth tentacle?

(*Plaintiff fights furiously to reach defendant. Is restrained by well-wishers and the court bailiff.*)

DEFENDANT: Do you know what he uses it for? That fourth tentacle is the one he uses to zorrgle his grob! (*Plaintiff shrieks and faints.*) Didn't know I knew you

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were a grob-zorrgler, did you, Usussis? But I do. I—

JUDGE: Order! Order! Be silent, Mr. Paulson. Order in the court! Before I order it cleared!

(*The noise in the court gradually subsides, except in the compound of the plaintiff, where the plaintiff, now revived and convulsed with shame, is furiously gnashing his teeth and tearing up a contract-sized sheaf of legal papers*)

JUDGE: Bailiff, apprehend the prisoner and bring him before me.

(*Bailiff does so.*)

JUDGE: Garth Paulson, you have just been witnessed in the flagrant act of violating an injunction issued by this court. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?

PRISONER: Guilty, your honor. And let me say that I would gladly do it again—and *will* do it again, if necessary.

JUDGE: Silence! The law is not to be flouted with impunity, whatever good motives the prisoner may conceive himself to have.

PRISONER: Give me liberty or give me death.

JUDGE: You are forbidden to attempt to instruct the court. I hereby sentence you to two years in terms of the time on your native world, in the custody of a person to be appointed by the court, who will determine the places and conditions of your confinement. And I appoint as custodian of this prisoner, the Human female Marge Jolman, provided that, the better to carry out the duties hereby imposed on her by the court, she submits to the mating ceremony with the prisoner without delay. Expenses of both prisoner and jailer to be born by the plaintiff in this case for the duration of the sentence. That's all. Court concluded. Clear the room, Bailiff.

PRISONER: Thank you, Judge.

JUDGE (*with twinkles in his top dozen eyes*): Don't thank me, Mr. Paulson. It was a pleasure to put a spoke in the wheel of that sneaky Sloonian's finagling. Where will you children be going on this honeymoon of yours at Usussis' expense? May I recommend the resort areas on Elysia? Nothing but the best, there.

PRISONER: We'll think about it, Judge.

JUDGE: There's just one thing, though. How did you manage to discover that Usussis had actually salted your week with that fake Zeepsday made out of Sloonian time? I've always understood it was almost impossible for even an expert to distinguish alien from natural time when it's been firmly intruded in the temporal structure.

PRISONER: Well, I know it's supposed to be—

CUSTODIAN OF THE PRISONER: It's just that Garth is so sensitive—

PRISONER: Let me tell him, Marge. You see, Judge, there was nothing you could put your finger on, at first. But the morning I

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signed the contract I had begun to itch; and shortly after I did sign the contract, I took a look at the wrist I was scratching; and the truth jumped at me.

JUDGE: Ah, yes, I remember something being said about that.

PRISONER: Exactly.

JUDGE: You saw on your wrist . . .?

PRISONER: Hives. I was allergic to Sloonian time.

JUDGE: Marvelous! Truly virtue triumphs in the most unexpected —Clerk, what are you doing, putting all this down? The court has concluded. Close your record.

RECORD CLOSED.

TRANSCRIPT CONCLUDED.

"I don't know who he is—but he turns up every feeding time."

Ronald Searle is one of England's best known cartoonists. The cartoon above appeared in his collection, "The Female Approach," copyright, 1954, by Ronald Searle.

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Recommended Reading

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

DAMON KNIGHT IS NOT ONLY ONE of the major creators of modern science fiction (watch for a striking new Knight novelet in next month's F&SF); he is at once its most penetrating and most entertaining critic, shrewdly analytical in thought while shaping his prose with as much care and wit as in his creative writing.

It's fitting that Knight should be the first of s.f.'s reviewers to have his critiques, originally published in various magazines, assembled in book form, as IN SEARCH OF WONDER (Advent, $4). Somewhat revised for the occasion, they add up to a comprehensive picture of the book publication of science fiction in the 1950's, valuable as a historical record, stimulating as a detailed analysis of faults and virtues, and delightful simply as good reading matter in its own right. The illustrations are by Pat Lyons, and the introduction by me.

For admirable critiques of pure fantasy, see Vincent Starrett's BEST LOVED BOOKS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (Bantam, 35¢). Mr. Starrett has an unusual gift for the just evaluation of popular literature, steering a nicely calculated middle course between the stuffiness of a Wilson and the sloppiness of a Woolcott; and it's amazing how completely he can evoke the nature of a book in an essay of 900 words. Of these 52 books recognized popularly (if not always critically) as masterpieces, 5 are fantasies: THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, THE CROCK OF GOLD, PETER PAN, THE WIZARD OF OZ and JUST SO STORIES—and I don't know where you'll find more enlightening comment on their varied histories and qualities.

I hope that some critic (preferably me, in some world in which time is infinite) will eventually examine the relationship between fantasy and opera. There seems to be a natural affinity between the two media (as there is between fantasy and TV, if only agency executives could be made to see it); and I think that many critics of music would agree with my opinion that the greatest of fantasy operas is also the greatest opera in any genre: Mozart's DIE ZAUBERFLOETE. Its musical greatness is unquestioned; its greatness as a fantasy becomes evident perhaps for the first time in THE MAGIC FLUTE: English version by W. H. Auden and

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Chester Kallman (Random, $3.50). These creative translators have not only written verse much better than Schikaneder's German original (and added some dazzling flights of witty verse-commentary); they have suddenly made clear the pattern and the symbolic fantasy-logic of the story. The result is a libretto worthy (as the original is not) of the music—as if, in a universe of free creative time travel, Verdi had found his Boïto or Rodgers his Hammerstein 164 years out of time.

Fantasy on the bestseller list, despite Starrett's examples, is an almost infinitely rare phenomenon; but Philip Wylie's THE ANSWER (Rinehart, $1.50) did turn up there for 3 weeks in July. The volume's also nearly unique in being a magazine story of only 13,000 words published as a book by itself. I suppose that any fantasy with such unprecedented credentials deserves your examination; but I must report that, though it has the high professional readability one expects of Wylie, it seems to me an unspeakably silly story. It's about the political and spiritual repercussions of the accidental killing of an angel in an H-bomb test, and is illogical, inconsistent and painfully oversimplified. I can only guess that its popularity, likes saucerism and the reincarnation craze, is part of the modern hunger for sterilized mysticism, neatly packaged and guaranteed free from infectious traces of religion or moral responsibility.

Eric Frank Russell's short stories and novelets about the adventures of the spaceship *Marathon,* which began with the classic *Jay Score,* are now gathered together as MEN, MARTIANS AND MACHINES (Roy, $3). They don't hold up quite so well as on individual appearance (mostly in *Astounding,* 1941-1943); the pattern—land on strange planet, meet alien perils, escape—becomes monotonous, and the story of interstellar exploration has grown more complex and subtle in recent years, in such hands as those of Murray Leinster and Chad Oliver. But this is still good rousing inventive (if slightly old-fashioned) space adventure; and the first story remains a technical marvel. I know few surprise-ending stories in any category which are so rereadable and so absolutely fair—and what other trick short ever had enough un-tricky meat to it to serve as the foundation for a series?

The explorations of alien-life trapper Gerry Carlisle, in Arthur K. Barnes's INTERPLANETARY HUNTER (Gnome, $3), are even more old-fashioned (they originated in *Thrilling Wonder,* 1937-1946), but a good deal of innocent fun. The book is published for teen-agers, but adults too may well enjoy the glamorous Gerry and the ingeniously invented beasties she captures. (Note: One of the stories

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originally appeared as a collaboration with Henry Kuttner, though this volume does not credit him.)

Collectors and librarians should know that the first hardcover collection of shorts and novelets by C. M. Kornbluth has appeared in England: THE MINDWORM (Joseph, 12 *s.*, 6 *d.*). The 12 stories include all but one of those in Kornbluth's paperback THE EXPLORERS (Ballantine, 1954), plus four more of his best. Even though more than half the stories can be found in anthologies, the astonishingly high level of quality, both in writing and in imaginative thought, makes this a basic volume for a permanent s.f. library.

Hardcover science fiction novels continue scarce in 1956, with only one on hand at the moment: George O. Smith's HIGHWAYS IN HIDING (Gnome, $3). From *Imagination,* 1955, this is easily Smith's best book to date—a happily wild melodrama of the battle for power between two underground groups seeking to control a mysterious disease which crystallizes flesh . . . and which can be made to produce a race of indestructible supermen. There may be flaws in plausibility and consistency, but plot-contrivance and adventurous pace are unflaggingly exciting. (The book is rich in typographical errors, one of which is inspired: on page 169 the word *hypo* appears, fittingly, as *typo.*)

In "science"-less fantasy, you should find delighted contentment in Manning Coles's THE FAR TRAVELLER (Doubleday, $3) and Ben Lucien Burman's SEVEN STARS FOR CATFISH BEND (Funk & Wagnalls, $2.75). The Coles novel tells of a high-spirited young German aristocrat who died in 1869 and returns in 1955 to amend (and eventually to star in) the film version of his brief and romantic life. It's more tightly knit and even more absurdly entertaining than the previous Coles ventures into the gayer aspects of psychic research. Burman's allegory of the problems of charmingly characterized animals on the Mississippi may be minutely less effective than the memorable HIGHWATER AT CATFISH BEND (Messner, 1952); but it is shrewd, pointed, humorous, un-cute and the closest approach to Walt Kelly in prose fiction.

You'll notice that this month there are no asterisks after the prices of hardcover books, and no footnote referring you to a fuller explanation of F&SF's Readers' Book Service. This omission is a deliberate experiment; I wonder just how useful you've been finding this RBS. It's set up, quite literally, as a non-profit service; if it is of real value to F&SF's readers, we'll be happy to continue it. If not . . . well, I'd be grateful if you'd let us know what you think about keeping on with it.

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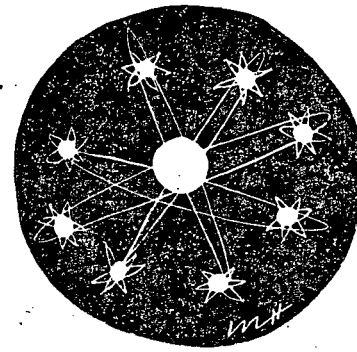

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A grotesque little nightmare, depicting a new interstellar conflict, a new alien horror . . . and an old, old human flaw.

The Hero Comes

by IDRIS SEABRIGHT

"I WANT MY TREATY RIGHTS!" Appy squawked. He flapped his wings.

Charleen's little eyes narrowed obstinately. "It's an old treaty. Out of date. I'm sick of you bird people coming and bothering me."

"It may be old, but it's never been superseded. We granted you earth people the land for your spaceship repair station in perpetuity. In return for that you agreed, also in perpetuity, to give any eligible male of breeding age a beautifying plastic coat on his wings. And to help us prevent the hatching of the egg of the tatzel worm."

"The tatzel worm is nothing but a myth," Charleen answered, shifting her ground.

"How can you say that?" Appy demanded, outraged. "You've seen the egg yourself. It's plainly visible under the north part of the station wall, right by this tower. The people who made the treaty with us didn't think it was a myth!"

Charleen made a face. She may have been reflecting that the most expeditious way of getting rid of Appy, so she could get back to her perpetual day dreams, would be to let him have what he had come for. At any rate she reached in a drawer, pulled out a requisition blank, and filled it in.

"What do you want the beauty coat for, anyway?" she asked, not holding the slip out to him.

"Don't you know?" Appy asked, shocked at such ignorance. "To help us with our mating, of course. Make us more attractive to the females. Our hatching rate gets lower all the time. We're worried about it.

"I don't know why you make it so hard for us. Even getting into the station's difficult. I lost one or two feathers getting through the south gate. My brother didn't have that much trouble getting in for his coat. You have the plastic extrusion machines constantly at work narrowing the gates and building up the height of the walls."

Charleen smiled a small, secret

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smile. She held the requisition slip out to him. "Administration building, second floor," she said. "Don't come back."

Appy snatched the slip and stuffed it in his pouch. He waddled off excitedly.

Charleen looked after him. When the door had closed, she turned the pointer on her sound machine to SIEGFRIED: ACT THREE. She broke out a box of chocolates from the stores—chocolates were almost her only article of diet nowadays—and switched on the sound machine. She lay down on the chaise longue.

The music began to roll out. Charleen munched creme-centered chocolates and dreamed. After about ten minutes she got up and moved the switchboard controls that would set the plastic extrusion machines to work increasing the height of the station walls. Ramparts, ramparts for her hero to climb. How could she expect Siegfried to show up and awaken her if there weren't any ramparts for him to cross? A hero has to have ramparts. There.

She lay down on the couch again and reached for a sweet. The springs squeaked.

Appy, meantime, had found the administration building. It had been put up at a time when spaceship traffic was much more extensive than it was at present, and the repair station had housed a numerous human personnel. There was nothing but robots in it now, which was lucky for Charleen. She could never have concealed her growing delusion from her peers.

Appy went in. On the second floor, he handed his slip to a humanoid robot at a window. "Turn to your right and straight on back," the robot said.

Appy obeyed. He was shivering with excitement. He found himself in a cubicle with a pole for him to sit on and an orifice at wing level that was just wing size.

"Insert your right wing in the opening," a voice said. "What color wing coating will you have?"

"Purple," Appy replied instantly. Purple was Clete's favorite color. Oh, boy!

The beauty coat spraying began. It stung and tickled a little, but was not at all unpleasant, actually. Appy, twisting his head around to see the edge of his wing, perceived that it was turning a most wonderful rosy Tyrian purple. It was a lovely color. When Clete saw it she'd—Oh, boy! Would they mate! Would she lay eggs! A dozen in a clutch! Oh, boy! What a nest they'd have!

The spraying stopped. "Left wing now," said the voice.

Appy inserted his left wing. The spraying started. Almost instantly it stopped.

"What's the trouble?" Appy asked after a moment. "I'm waiting. Go on with the coat."

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There was no answer. Appy joggled up and down on the roosting pole. He kicked experimentally at the panel with the wing opening in it. Nothing happened. He waited. He tried a squawk. Nothing happened. At last he drew his left wing out of the opening.

The wing looked terrible. The few drops of plastic that had landed on it had given its normal olive drab coloring a faintly rotten look. It was a wing that might have been buried in mould for a long time.

Appy's disappointment was extreme. He went back to the humanoid robot in the front office and tried to tell it that the spray mechanism didn't work, but the robot, not being wired for such a situation, didn't answer him. At last he returned to the tower where Charleen was.

He waddled in quietly. Charleen, starting up from an exceptionally vivid fantasy, mis-saw him. "At last you've come," she said dreamily. "My hero. I knew you would."

Appy gave a puzzled sound, a cross between a cheep and a squawk. Charleen really looked at him. "Oh," she said. "It's you."

"Of course it's me. Who were you expecting? The beauty coat spraying machine doesn't work."

"Why come to me about it?" Charleen demanded, sitting up on the couch. Her voice was thoroughly cross.

"I want you to fix it."

"I don't know how."

"Of course you do! Anybody could. You wouldn't be in charge of the station if the commissioners didn't think you were competent to make minor repairs."

Charleen rubbed her forehead. "Maybe. I've forgotten a lot of things," she said in what sounded like genuine bewilderment.

"Well, fix this."

Charleen's piggy eyes regarded him. She went to the window and looked out questioningly at the station walls. She frowned. She came back and inspected the dials that registered the activities of the plastic extrusion machines. "That's funny," she said in a blank voice. "I *thought* the walls weren't any higher. They've all stopped."

"All what?" asked Appy.

Charleen did not answer him. She went to a tool cabinet (like all poor housekeepers, she kept everything in one room), hunted around in it, and came out with a roll of wrenches and screwdrivers. "I'll let you have this," she said, "if you'll promise to fix the plastic extrusion machines on the walls as well."

"What makes you think I can fix them?" Appy asked in a not-unflattered voice.

"You bird men are always squawking about what hot mechanics you could be if you only had the tools."

Appy flapped his wings reflec-

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tively. He'd never had a screwdriver in his weak little pseudocheir in his life. But Charleen was obviously incapable of repairing anything, and the picture of himself in the role of mechanic was not without its attractions. "All right."

Charleen gave him the tools. "Remember, you promised to fix the machines on the walls too."

"Oh, sure." He thrust the roll of tools into his pouch and waddled off at top speed. Charleen, who was getting further south with every hour that passed, lay down on the couch again.

It took Appy about an hour to get the plate off the wing orifice of the beauty coat machine. When he did detach it, he couldn't make any sense at all out of what was inside. He poked twice at the connections with the screwdriver. Nothing happened. On the third poke there was a sharp *pssst!*, a bright blue spark, and a cloud of smoke. He had caused a short.

This was not surprising, since all that ailed the machine was a clotted jet in the spraying mechanism. Current was still passing through it. The case with the extruders on the wall was rather different; their supply of liquid plastic was exhausted. The extruders' original purpose had been to make extremely minor repairs in the inner paneling of space ships: Charleen had used up two years' supply of the material in four months.

Appy didn't know what to do. He hated to go back to Charleen and tell her he had broken something. He fanned nervously at the smoke with his wing tips. It got denser. He fanned harder. At last a tongue of yellow flame appeared.

Appy gave a chittering shriek. He bounced from one foot to the other in an agony of indecision. Then he reached inside the machine and yanked desperately at the wires. He tore loose a whole handful of stuff.

He got a shock that jolted him down to the ends of his tail feathers. He also started a first-class fire.

For a moment he stared, appalled, at the billowing black smoke and the leaping reddish flame. Then he turned and scurried at top speed down the corridor, past the robot clerks, and out into the air. The fire might be his fault, but he wasn't going to get burned up.

Once in the open, he clambered and fluttered his way to the top of the supply dump. He refused to go tell Charleen that he had set the administration building on fire, but he wanted to see what was going to happen next.

Dense black smoke was pouring from the windows of the building. Occasionally, as the wind changed, he saw, through the clouds of smoke, the angry cherry-red of a very hot fire. The automatic sprinkling system had come on, of course, as soon as the heat of Ap-

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py's fire reached the ceiling; but the automatic sprinkling system, like a good many other things under Charleen's guardianship, was rather out of repair. There was a leak in the line near the pumping station. The sprinklers came on, but no water came out. The administration building continued to burn.

Two or three minutes passed. Then there was the loud clang of an alarm bell. The door of the fire house rolled open. Automatic fire-fighting equipment was coming out.

The fire-fighting equipment was in better shape than a lot of things in the station. Hoses poured on streams of carbon dioxide and jets of wetter water. Robots tossed damp sand on patches of embers. Within half an hour, all that was left of Appy's fire was a few threads of smoke.

Appy, a little stiff from watching, flopped his way down to street level. It had been quite a fire.

Once on the flat, he chewed a wing tip undecidedly. He still wanted his beauty coat; he'd have to face Charleen sooner or later. But he dreaded it. He'd do it tomorrow; the sun was already in the west, and in an hour or two it would have set. Yes, tomorrow. Right now he needed rest.

He didn't want to spend the night in the station. He squeezed his way through the south gate, found a tree with a conveniently projecting branch, and hopped up on it. He tucked his head under his right wing, the plastic-coated one. He slept.

The clang of the alarm bell had partly roused Charleen from her endless fantasy. She had lain on her chaise for four or five minutes, wondering. Then she had gone to one of the tower windows and looked out.

A sheet of ruddy flame was lapping ardently at the administration roof. Charleen's hands clasped together in admiration, her mouth opened in delight. She looked on, fascinated, while the automatic fire-fighting machines dealt efficiently with the lovely flame. When the fire was out, she sighed.

She went back to her couch and sat down heavily on it. She reached for a chocolate, and laid it back in its frilled paper cup. She didn't want chocolates. She wanted . . . She sat very still. She was having thoughts.

Plastic . . . ramparts . . ., her mind churned away slowly, *no . . . good. No hero . . . ever climb . . . those walls. Hero . . . wants walls . . . of fire.*

Her small, bemused eyes widened. She nodded. To put it more succinctly, Charleen was thinking that you couldn't expect Siegfried to show up and pierce the flames for her when there were no fiery ramparts for him to pierce. The essence of a hero like Siegfried is fire. *Fire.*

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She got up from the couch and began to rummage around through cupboards and closets. She had had to do some Thermit welding two or three years ago; if she could only find . . . Yes. There it was, plenty of it, and some magnesium ribbon too. It would make a lovely fire.

Charleen giggled. She put on her work clothes and picked up the cans of Thermit. She left the tower.

The sun had almost set. With some difficulty—she weighed over two hundred pounds—Charleen put a ladder in place and climbed out on the wall. With the concentration of monomania, she proceeded to lay a train of Thermit over the whole circuit, all around the repair station. She passed the plastic extrusion machines by without a glance.

She got back to her starting point. She backed down the ladder for several steps and then ignited the magnesium cautiously. She tossed it neatly on to the Thermit train.

Plastic of the type extruded by Charleen's machines is not very inflammable. But almost anything will burn vigorously under the stimulus of burning Thermit. Charleen descended the ladder hastily. She looked up with satisfaction at what she had done.

The plastic continued to burn. It smelled bad. It crackled. It was unpleasantly hot. But Charleen had indubitably created a rampart of flame. It was a wall of fire in the gathering night.

Charleen went back to her tower. She took off her work clothes and lay down on the couch. She reached for a chocolate. She ate it slowly and with relish. *Now* he'd come.

On his tree limb in the clearing, Appy awoke with a start. He was feeling uncomfortably warm.

When he located the source of his discomfort, he was astounded. He regarded the glowing ramparts with stupefaction. Two fires in one day? What did it mean? Had he, in some involuntary fashion, started the second one?

He hopped down from the tree and nervously flopped to a safer distance. The plastic cnntinued to burn. It certainly was getting hot.

Back inside the station there came the loud clang of an alarm bell; it made Charleen, now eating her third chocolate, frown in annoyance. The door of the fire house rolled open. The automatic fire-fighting equipment started to roll out.

It stopped. It stopped because an earthquake rippled across the ground in front of it. At least Appy, watching the conflagration apprehensively from a little hillock, thought that the tremor of the ground must be an earthquake. In reality it had nothing to do with genuine seismic activity. But

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the fire-fighting equipment was stopped.

The fire got hotter. The trees near Appy began to crackle. The ground shook again. Stones were dropping out of the walls around the station. A slice of the administration building, weakened by the earlier fire, fell with a muted crash. The alarm bell clanged.

Charleen, still eating chocolates, attributed the uproar to the coming of Siegfried. Appy, on his hillock, was wiser. After the third "earthquake" he realized what was happening. Horror clutched at him.

The egg of the tatzel worm was hatching out!

He turned and ran. His wings flailed, his feet pumped desperately. It was the best time he'd ever made in his life. At last, at a safe distance, he stopped and looked back.

An enormous, horrid, ophidian head was rearing over the fiery ramparts. The faceted eyes gleamed red in the firelight, the neck was as thick as a tree trunk. It turned Appy cold to look at it. He'd heard about the horrors of the tatzel worm since he was a fledgling. This was worse than he had thought.

The head sank down and disappeared. There was a tremendous crash of breaking glass and the sound of wood splintering. After a moment the head reappeared, holding Charleen lightly between its dreadfully-toothed jaws. Her expression was beatific. There was a box of chocolates in her hand.

Her lips moved; if Appy had been near enough, he would have heard the words, "Siegfried! My hero . . . At last!" In the jaws of the tatzel worm, Charleen was happy; at last she was being carried off.

Appy neither knew nor cared. When the head had reappeared with Charleen, he had begun to run once more. There was despair in his heart. The station was burning, the beauty coat machine was wrecked, he'd never get Clete now. That big clutch of eggs would forever remain a myth. The forest was on fire. And what would happen to the bird people now that the tatzel worm was hatched?

The first tatzel worm had preyed remorselessly on Appy's ancestors. It had taken half their best men to kill it. The new worm was even bigger. This was the end of the world, the end of everything. What would happen to the bird people's hatching rate *now*? He wished he'd never asked for the plastic beauty coat.

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GIMMICKS THREE

The following three stories offer something unique in the way of collaborative authorship — and something unique, too, in the way of virtuoso entertainment. You'll find the full explanation of how this triptych came into being after you read the first entry, in which Isaac Asimov delightfully displays his mastery of storytelling, fantasy logic and technical trickery.

The Brazen Locked Room

by ISAAC ASIMOV

"COME, COME," SAID SHAPUR QUITE politely, considering that he was a demon. "You are wasting my time. And your own, too, I might add, since you have only half an hour left." And his tail twitched.

"It's *not* dematerialization?" asked Isidore Wellby, thoughtfully.

"I have already said it is not," said Shapur.

For the hundredth time, Wellby looked at the unbroken bronze that surrounded him on all sides. The demon had taken unholy pleasure (what other kind indeed?) in pointing out that the floor, ceiling and four walls were featureless, two-foot-thick slabs of bronze, welded seamlessly together.

It was the ultimate locked room and Wellby had but another half hour to get out, while the demon watched with an expression of gathering anticipation.

It had been ten years previously (to the day, naturally) that Isidore Wellby had signed up.

"We pay you in advance," said Shapur, persuasively. "Ten years of anything you want, within reason, and then you're a demon. You're one of us, with a new name of demonic potency, and many privileges beside. You'll hardly know you're damned. And if you don't sign, you may end up in the fire, anyway, just in the ordinary course of things. You never know. . . . Here, look at me. I'm not doing too badly. I signed up, had my ten years, and here I am. Not bad."

"Why so anxious for me to sign then, if I might be damned anyway?" asked Wellby.

"It's not so easy to recruit hell's cadre," said the demon, with a frank shrug that made the faint odor of sulfur dioxide in the air a

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trifle stronger. "Everyone wishes to gamble on ending in heaven. It's a poor gamble, but there it is. I think *you're* too sensible for that. But meanwhile we have more damned souls than we know what to do with and a growing shortage at the administrative end."

Wellby, having just left the army and finding himself with nothing much to show for it but a limp and a farewell letter from a girl he somehow still loved, pricked his finger, and signed.

Of course, he read the small print first. A certain quantity of demonic powers would be deposited to his account upon signature in blood. He would not know in detail how one manipulated those powers, or even the nature of all of them, but he would nevertheless find his wishes fulfilled in such a way that they would seem to have come about through perfectly normal mechanisms.

Naturally, no wish might be fulfilled which would interfere with the higher aims and purposes of human history. Wellby had raised his eyebrows at that.

Shapur coughed. "A precaution imposed upon us by—uh—Above. You are reasonable. The limitation won't interfere with you."

Wellby said, "There seems to be a catch clause, too."

"A kind of one, yes. After all, we have to check your aptitude for the position. It states, as you see, that you will be required to perform a task for us at the conclusion of your ten years, one your demonic powers will make it quite possible for you to do. We can't tell you the nature of the task now, but you will have ten years to study the nature of your powers. Look upon the whole thing as an entrance qualification."

"And if I don't pass the test, what then?"

"In that case," said the demon, "you will be only an ordinary damned soul after all." And because he was a demon, his eyes glowed smokily at the thought and his clawed fingers twitched as as though he felt them already deep in the other's vitals. But he added suavely, "Come, now, the test will be a simple one. We would rather have you as cadre than as just another chore on our hands."

Wellby, with sad thoughts of his unattainable loved one, cared little enough at that moment for what would happen after ten years and he signed.

Yet the ten years passed quickly enough. Isidore Wellby was always reasonable, as the demon had predicted, and things worked well. Wellby accepted a position and because he was always at the right spot at the right time and always said the right thing to the right man, he was quickly promoted to a position of great authority.

Investments he made invariably paid off and, what was more grati-

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fying still, his girl came back to him most sincerely repentant and most satisfactorily adoring.

His marriage was a happy one and was blessed with four children, two boys and two girls, all bright and reasonably well-behaved. At the end of ten years, he was at the height of his authority, reputation and wealth, while his wife, if anything, had grown more beautiful as she had matured.

And ten years (to the day, naturally) after the making of the compact, he woke to find himself, not in his bedroom, but in a horrible bronze chamber of the most appalling solidity, with no company other than an eager demon.

"You have only to get out, and you will be one of us," said Shapur. "It can be done fairly and logically by using your demonic powers, provided you know exactly what it is you're doing. You should, by now."

"My wife and children will be very disturbed at my disappearance," said Wellby, with the beginning of regrets.

"They will find your dead body," said the demon, consolingly. "You will seem to have died of a heart attack and you will have a beautiful funeral. The minister will consign you to heaven and we will not disillusion him or those who listen to him. Now come, Wellby, you have till noon."

Wellby, having unconsciously steeled himself for this moment for ten years, was less panic-stricken than he might have been. He looked about speculatively. "Is this room perfectly enclosed? No trick openings?"

"No openings anywhere in the walls, floor or ceiling," said the demon, with a professional delight in his handiwork. "Or at the boundaries of any of those surfaces, for that matter. Are you giving up?"

"No, no. Just give me time."

Wellby thought very hard. There seemed no sign of closeness in the room. There was even a feeling of moving air. The air might be entering the room by dematerializing across the walls. Perhaps the demon had entered by dematerialization and perhaps Wellby himself might leave in that manner. He asked.

The demon grinned. "Dematerialization is not one of your powers. Nor did I myself use it in entering."

"You're sure now?"

"The room is my own creation," said the demon, smugly, "and especially constructed for you."

"And you entered from outside?"

"I did."

"With reasonable demonic powers which I possess, too?"

"Exactly. Come, let us be precise. You cannot move through matter but you can move in any dimension by a mere effort of will. You

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can move up, down, right, left, obliquely and so on, but you cannot move through matter in any way."

Wellby kept on thinking, and Shapur kept on pointing out the utter immovable solidity of the brazen walls, floor and ceiling, their unbroken ultimacy.

It seemed obvious to Wellby that Shapur, however much he might believe in the necessity for recruiting cadre, was barely restraining his demonic delight at possibly having an ordinary damned soul to amuse himself with.

"At least," said Wellby, with a sorrowful attempt at philosophy, "I'll have ten happy years to look back on. Surely that's a consolation, even for a damned soul in hell."

"Not at all," said the demon. "Hell would not be hell, if you were allowed consolations. Everything anyone gains on Earth by pacts with the devil, as in your case (or my own, for that matter), is exactly what one might have gained without such a pact if one had worked industriously and in full trust in—uh—Above. That is what makes all such bargains so truly demonic." And the demon laughed with a kind of cheerful howl.

Wellby said, indignantly. "You mean my wife would have returned to me even if I had never signed your contract."

"She might have," said Shapur. "Whatever happens is the will of—uh—Above, you know. We ourselves can do nothing to alter that."

The chagrin of that moment must have sharpened Wellby's wits for it was then that he vanished, leaving the room empty, except for a surprised demon. And surprise turned to absolute fury, when the demon looked at the contract with Wellby which he had, until that moment, been holding in his hand for final action, one way or the other.

It was ten years (to the day, naturally) after Isidore Wellby had signed his pact with Shapur that the demon entered Wellby's office and said, most angrily, "Look here—"

Wellby looked up from his work, astonished. "Who are you?"

"You know very well who I am," said Shapur.

"Not at all," said Wellby.

The demon looked sharply at the man. "I see you are telling the truth, but I can't make out the details." He promptly flooded Wellby's mind with the events of the last ten years.

Wellby said, "Oh, yes. I can explain, of course, but are you sure we will not be interrupted?"

"We won't be," said the demon, grimly.

"I sat in that closed brazen room," said Wellby, "and—"

"Never mind that," said the demon, hastily. "I want to know—"

"Please. Let me tell this my way."

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The demon clamped his jaws and fairly exuded sulfur dioxide till Wellby coughed and looked pained.

Wellby said, "If you'll move off a bit. Thank you. —Now I sat in that closed brazen room and remembered how you kept stressing the absolute unbrokenness of the four walls, the floor and the ceiling. I wondered: why did you specify? What else was there beside walls, floor and ceiling? You had defined a completely enclosed three-dimensional space.

"And that was it: *three*-dimensional. The room was not closed in the fourth dimension. It did not exist indefinitely in the past. You said you had created it for me. So if one traveled into the past one would find oneself at a point in time, eventually, when the room did not exist and then one would be out of the room.

"What's more, you *had* said I could move in any dimension, and time may certainly be viewed as a dimension. In any case, as soon as I decided to move toward the past, I found myself living backward at a tremendous rate and suddenly there was no bronze around me anywhere."

Shapur cried, in anguish, "I can guess all that. You couldn't have escaped any other way. It's this contract of yours that I'm concerned about. If you're not an ordinary damned soul, very well, it's part of the game. But you must be at least one of *us,* one of the cadre; it's what you were paid for, and if I don't deliver you down below, I will be in enormous trouble."

Wellby shrugged his shoulders. "I'm sorry for you, of course, but I can't help you. As an inexperienced time-traveler, I must have overaccelerated; for when I managed to brake my backward progress, I found myself just at the point in time at which I was making the bargain with you. There you were again; there I was, you were pushing the contract toward me, together with a stylus with which I might prick my finger. To be sure, as I had moved back in time, my memory of what was becoming the future faded out, but not, apparently, quite entirely. As you pushed the contract at me, I felt uneasy. I didn't quite remember the future, but I felt uneasy. So I didn't sign. I turned you down flat."

Shapur ground his teeth. "I might have known. If probability patterns affected demons, I would have shifted with you into this new *if*-world. As it is, all I can say is that you have lost the ten happy years we paid you with. That is one consolation. And we'll get you in the end. That is another."

"Well, now," said Wellby, "are there consolations in hell? Through the ten years I have now lived, I knew nothing of what I might have obtained. But now that

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you've put the memory of the ten-years-that-might-have-been into my mind, I recall that, in the bronze room, you told me that demonic agreements could give nothing that could not be obtained by industry and trust in Above. I have been industrious and I have trusted."

Wellby's eyes fell upon the photograph of his beautiful wife and four beautiful children, then traveled about the tasteful luxuriance of his office. "And I may even escape hell altogether. . . ."

And the demon, with a horrible shriek, vanished forever.

[*Before purists protest that the Brazen Locked Room is described as made of bronze, not brass, let me note that the title refers primarily to the brazen audacity of the Locked Room genre itself. There is also a certain amount of brass in the manner in which the Asimovian subconscious found its solution to the problem . . . but that is a private matter between Mr. A. and the author of* Elsewhen (Astounding, *January, 1943*).]

Ten months ago, in introducing Theodore R. Cogswell's ingenious Threesie, *I quoted from a letter of Cogswell's: "I love the Pact-with-the-Devil simply because it* is *such an oldie that — like the locked room and the time paradox — technically it's a lot of fun to try to work out a new twist. If some day I can successfully combine solutions to all three in one short, I'll die happy." Such a challenge proved irresistible, almost simultaneously, to Isaac Asimov and to Miriam Allen deFord. I had no sooner read Asimov's story than I received Miss deFord's, which similarly demonstrates the dexterity of the real pros in our business by combining the same three gimmicks in a completely different, if equally ingenious manner.*

Time Trammel

by MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD

Saturday, November 26, 1955, 12:11 P.M.

DR. OGDEN WORRIEDLY CARESSED HIS bald forehead as he watched.

"You see, the door's fast," he said. "Just the way the nurse reported it to me."

Dr. Vance, bigger, huskier, and

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older, pounded hard with both hands.

"Come on, Henry," he called. "Let us in. Don't you want your lunch?"

There was no reply. The door hadn't budged under the pounding.

"But surely he couldn't lock it?" Vance asked in a shocked tone.

"Naturally not. We don't provide locked doors for paranoiacs, no matter how well they're doing. He's sealed it with something."

"What?"

"That's what we'll find out. Oh, here you are, Bert. I want you to break this door down—got the ax? And first tell the ward nurse to keep any stray patients away from here."

It took half a dozen blows by the burly orderly before the thick door yielded. Fragments of something splintered off from all four edges.

"Clay," said Ogden, picking up a piece. "He's been modeling, in industrial therapy. Probably kept stealing little bits and putting them in his pockets till he had enough. He has water in his room to make it soft again."

The door fell inward with a crash.

"O.K., Henry," said Dr. Ogden, stepping over it. "What's all this about?"

The room was empty.

There was only the one door, and the iron bars on the one window were all in place. Dr. Vance tested each one deliberately, to make sure none had been sawed through and reset.

The three men looked at one another in incredulous dismay.

"It's impossible," Ogden murmured at last. "He couldn't possibly get out. But he isn't here."

"You needn't stay, Bert," said Dr. Vance. "And keep your lip buttoned up about this, hear? Not a word to *anyone,* if you value your job."

"I don't know the case, doctor," he went on as the orderly left. "What about this man?"

"Henry Albrecht," said Ogden. The shock had got him, and he sat down on the bed, shaking a little. "Engineer, aged 32. Been here two years, less a month. Diagnosis, paranoia with schizophrenic tendencies. Violent when he first came, but he's been progressing steadily."

"Delusions?"

"Two main ones—he was going to invent a machine to travel through time, and he had signed a pact with the devil."

"Quite a combination—contemporary science fiction and medieval superstition."

"Quite. At his last interview with me, he recognized them both for what they are. Paranoiacs are clever dissemblers, as you know, but he had me convinced he was practically ready for discharge.

"And now this. And where is he?"

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Dr. Vance laughed a little.

"Has it occurred to you, doctor, that if this man's delusions had really been true—"

"Now don't *you* crack up on me, Vance! I've got enough to worry about as it is."

"I said *if*. Well, where is he, and how do we find him—and his nice safe $100 a week?"

Saturday, November 26, 1977, 12:14 P.M.

"I see you managed it all right," said the tall, thin, saturnine gentleman in the black suit and Homburg.

Henry Albrecht smiled grimly.

"You took your time about it," he commented accusingly. "I had that room insulated from nine this morning, right after breakfast."

"You should have known you could rely on me. Ten years from now—it's 1977, by the way—you'll have invented your time machine. But right now it had to be done by teleportation, and that's hard to fix.

"And now how about confirming our little arrangement?"

Albrecht's eyebrows traveled up in surprise.

"What arrangement?" he asked.

The devil frowned.

"None of that now, Albrecht. You know better than to try to bluff me. If you want it in words of one syllable, you may recall that back in 1953 you and I had a little talk together, that time you accidently spoke the incantation that summoned me."

"Eight words of more than one syllable in that statement, if you count two in '1953,'" said Henry imperturbably. The devil went on without listening to him.

"I told you then, you will remember, that your invention would be totally impossible until a man who was at that moment a junior in college had worked out a new mathematical synthesis. I told you that if you were willing to wait until I had time to attend to the matter, I could transport you to the date of his announcement—which was last week. Then you could go ahead and work on your machine, and ten years from then you'd have it completed.

"I even explained to you why you had to wait—I told you about the big backlog of cases I had already on hand, so that it would be two years at least before you could come in under the American quota.

"If you'd had the brains to wait quietly and keep your mouth shut, the whole thing would have gone through without difficulty. But no—you had to talk. So the natural consequence was that you found yourself in a mental hospital.

"And even then I didn't forget you. The minute they gave you a private room, so I could talk to you alone, you remember that I appeared and gave you your further instructions."

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"I know all that," said Albrecht grudgingly. "Though I still don't see why I had to go through all that hocuspocus about sealing the door."

"You are a very selfish man, Albrecht," scolded the devil. "Did you want to be teleported here in full sight of all those other poor creatures who are really crazy, and maybe set some of them back permanently so that they'd never recover? Besides, I've got another case coming up in that ward myself, and I didn't want him to get ideas that wouldn't apply to him."

"But why couldn't it have been done at night?"

"And lose some poor nurse or orderly a job for having let you escape? This way they can't blame anybody."

"Oh, very well—though it's been no picnic in that place, I can assure you. But thanks anyway, old man, and now I'll have to see about getting established and starting work again."

"Just a minute, my slippery friend. You've conveniently forgotten the most important part of our conversation in 1953. Are you going to pretend that I did all this for you just out of the kindness of my heart—which, incidentally, is non-existent? You signed a pact with me—remember?"

"Did I?"

"You know blessed well you did. And with your blood, too."

"How anachronistic!"

"But still binding."

"And what were the terms?"

"You know them perfectly well. Don't think you can either cajole me or cheat me, young man. That just isn't done."

"I wouldn't dream of it, sir. But just to get the record straight, suppose you tell me again the terms of this alleged pact."

The devil reached into the inside pocket of his coat.

"I have it right here, in red—rather rusty by now—and white. Very well, I'll read it to you."

He drew horn-rimmed glasses from a black case, and adjusted them on his high thin nose.

"'*I, Henry Albrecht,*'" he began, clearing his throat, "'*hereinafter known as the party of the first part, do hereby make, constitute and establish with His Satanic Majesty—*'

"You understand," he broke off to say, "that I'm not His Majesty (may he reign forever!) himself. I'm only a deputy. But an important official, I can assure you, young man, a very important one indeed."

He continued reading.

"'*—hereinafter known as the party of the second part the following agreement, contract, and pact:*

"'*Within two years from date, the party of the second part undertakes to transport the party of the first part to a time when antecedents necessary for the invention of a time-travel machine shall have come into existence. The party of*

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the second part also undertakes to insure that the party of the first part will succeed in such invention, and that he will live in health, without injury, and in solvency during the period required for its accomplishment.

"'*In return*'—in return, Albrecht —'*the party of the first part agrees herewith to render to the party of the second part all right, property, and use in or of his soul, spirit, personality, or individuality; provided that such right, property, and use shall be taken or made not earlier than one day following successful completion of said time machine.*

"'*The party of the first part further agrees that on accomplishment of his transportation into future time, as aforementioned, he will sign a codicil testifying that the first provision of this contract has been accomplished as promised, and reaffirming his agreement to perform his own obligation at the time appointed.*'

"That's what you signed, Albrecht. And I have added the codicil to the document. Now give me your left wrist so that I can draw the blood, and let's get the present formalities over with."

"So sorry, sir," said Henry Albrecht amiably. "Thanks for everything and all that. But your contract isn't worth the asbestos it's written on."

"What? What? Why not?" sputtered the devil, his urbanity gone.

"Why do you think I did babble a bit about the time machine and about my pact with you? For the express purpose of being certified as insane.

"If you'll look up my record at the hospital, you'll find three psychiatrists judged I was completely paranoiac for at least two years prior to my commitment.

"An incompetent can't be held to a contract, anywhere in the United States, where this was signed. To be sure, I could be held to it if I were to recover. But now you've removed me from the whole time-period when I was adjudged insane, so my record of incompetence can never be reversed.

"Too bad, old chap. But that's the way it is."

"I'll have you re-examined here, and cleared."

"You can't. That would violate the term of the contract by which you guarantee my health—that includes mental health, as well as physical. To examine me, even if I were cleared, would imply that there was a question as to my health—otherwise I wouldn't be needing any examination."

"Then I'll—I'll send you back there," choked the devil furiously.

"Oh, but you can't do that either. That would invalidate the promises made in the pact, and hence the pact itself."

"I'll get you yet!" growled the devil, emitting sparks.

Henry Albrecht grinned.

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"Remember Laurence Sterne?" he inquired conversationally. "I imagine you've got him down there in your place. Next time you see him, tell him we're still quoting *Tristram Shandy* up here. Like this: *'Go, poor devil, get thee gone!'"*

With a stench, a blaze, and an angry roar, he went.

To conclude the history of this triptych; Both Asimov and deFord felt that their stories should be cleared with Cogswell, who has a clear priority on this gimmick-trinity. But Cogswell had vanished. Even his agent had only a long-outdated address: and for a while Asimov, deFord and I began to worry about the possible intrusion of fantasy into the real life of fantasy writers. When Cogswell was rediscovered (in the Department of English of the University of Denver), he gave his blessings to both stories, with that generous camaraderie so characteristic of writers in our field. But, I mused editorially, it was his idea to start with, and that was a fine new pact-twist he came up with in Threesie, *and maybe . . . So I suggested that Cogswell turn his devious creative mind to making this a triune trinity, a set of Ginmicks Three-Squared. He did not disappoint me. Indeed, you may find this third story the most (as is only fitting) devilishly inventive and unexpected of the lot [And Mr. Cogswell can now "die happy" . . . but not, I trust, until — oh, say roughly around the period of Martian colonization, after a long career of brightening these pages with his deft deceptions.]*

Impact With the Devil

by THEODORE R. COGSWELL

X7367DH964

TO: SOLAR SECTOR COORDINATOR
FROM: UNASSIGNED AGENT X-27

JUST LOCATED THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN. CLIENT INSISTED ON USUAL AGREEMENT AND MADE USUAL MENTAL RESERVATION. WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE MY QUOTA FOR THIS DEMICYCLE IF YOU CAN MATERIALIZE A LANGRED WARPER IN THE CHICAGO FIELD OFFICE BY 21:30 TODAY WITHOUT FAIL.

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KRANS SIDLED WARILY THROUGH THE heavy steel door that opened off the main laboratory of Technology, Unlimited and gazed furtively around the large bare windowless room as if he were expecting some sort of a trap. The plain black walls seemed solid enough and there were no cracks in the gleaming jet expanse of freshly painted floor to betray trapdoors and hidden chutes leading down to hell knows where. The only really odd thing about the room was the cluster of ultraviolet and infrared lamps that were fixed in the ceiling and focused directly down on an old overstuffed easy chair that stood by itself in the exact center of the bare room. He went over to it, pushed it to one side, and carefully examined the section of floor it had occupied.

Satisfied at last, he shoved the chair back in its original position and went stealthily over to examine the only other furniture in the room, an ordinary desk and office chair that stood at the opposite end. Krans had lived too long by his wits to take anything for granted, and keeping one eye on the half-open heavy steel door at the far end of the room that was the only means of entrance, he made a quick inventory of the contents of the desk. The drawers were empty and the top contained only a large metal box covered with dials and meters, a legal document bearing his signature and that of the other, a cheap pen, and a large bottle of black ink.

"All set?" There was an odd humming sound to the voice of the tall, thin, saturnine individual who stepped lithely into the room. It was as if the vocal chords that produced the speech weren't quite human. Except for an immaculate white laboratory smock, he was dressed entirely in black; a black that matched exactly in shade the glossy hair that rose in a widow's peak from his strangely high forehead.

"I guess so," said Krans, and then suddenly stabbed a suspicious finger at the bank of lamps that hung over the easy chair. "What are those for?"

The other chuckled. "I switch them on when I want to relax. The heating system in this place leaves much to be desired and I'm used to a somewhat warmer climate."

"Me too," said Krans, shivering slightly. "Chicago in January ain't my idea of a vacation resort. If one of my boys wasn't in a jam you wouldn't catch me within a thousand miles of here."

"Ah, yes," said the tall man, "your difficulty. You never did tell me exactly what you were up to when we signed the contract."

Krans went over to the easy chair and sat down. "One of the boys got stupid, that's all. There ain't nothing in the contract that says I got to tell you the details."

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The man in the white jacket gave a delicate shrug. "I dare say I'll find out eventually," he said. "Did you bring the space-time coordinates?"

"Yeah," Krans pulled a slip of paper out of his pocket and began to read. As he did so the dark man's hands danced over the controls of the square box that stood on the desk in front of him, deftly making adjustments.

"Time: anywhere between 12:10 and 12:50 P.M. According to what my boys have been able to dig up the watchman always came by exactly on the hour so I won't have to worry about bumping into him. Date: March 17, 1947. Place: the blueprint room of the Anderson and Dickson Architectural Agency on the 12th floor of the Stadium Building."

The dark man's oddly slanted eyes made a quick sweep of the front of the machine and then he nodded. "I'm ready any time you are—though just to avoid future argument I feel that I should remind you again that changing the past in any noticeable way is impossible."

Krans just growled impatiently. "We went through all this before we signed the contract. You've agreed to take me back ten years in time, give me freedom of movement once I get there, and then to see that I get back in the same condition I was in when I left. Right?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Then let's get on with it!" Krans opened his briefcase and took out a large India rubber eraser, a soft pencil, and a straight-edged ruler. "I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

There was a sudden click of a switch on the front of the small black box and suddenly a shimmering oval sprang into being in front of the desk.

"Now what?" demanded Krans.

"Just walk through it. You'll come out in the place you've been asking for."

Krans hesitated and then squared his fat shoulders and took one step forward. The silver film rippled slightly as he pushed through it. Then, as long tapered fingers touched a control knob, it became transparent. Through the portal that opened into time could be seen the dimly lighted interior of the drafting room of the agency. Krans moved feverishly from board to board and then suddenly stopped before a large piece of paper covered with a number of small detail drawings. Squinting in the dim light he examined them one by one until he found the one he had come so far to find. His thick lips writhed back in a grimace of ugly triumph, and grasping firmly the large eraser he had brought with him, he began a series of slow deliberate strokes across the penciled lines of the drawing.

When he came charging back

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through the time warp, Krans looked as if he were on the verge of apoplexy.

"It wouldn't erase!" he growled in an ugly voice. "No matter how hard I rubbed, the eraser slid off like there was a layer of glass on top of the paper!"

"What did you expect?" asked the dark man blandly. "I gave you fair warning that the past couldn't be changed in any noticeable way. But of course that doesn't invalidate the contract. I merely promised to take you back ten years and return you. But before we move on to my part of the bargain—that part that says that you will make a substantial contribution to Technology, Unlimited—just as a matter of idle curiosity, what *is* this all about?"

"One of my boys is stuck inside the safety deposit vault of the First National," grumbled Krans. "Unless I can figure some way to get him out they're going to find him there when they open up Monday."

"So you got the bright idea that if you went back and tinkered with the plans used in the construction of the bank you could set up a way for your agent to escape without being detected. Clever idea that. Too bad it was impossible." He stretched himself like a lithe jungle cat and an eager look came into his eyes. "But let's get on with our transaction. You've got something I'd like very much to get my . . . ah . . . hands . . . on."

"Not just yet," said Krans harshly as he hunched forward in his chair. "*Not just yet!*"

As the dark man rose to his feet, a slight odor of brimstone began to fill the room. And then, as he took one step forward, there was a sudden crashing sound and a roaring swirl of angry flames came into being in the center of the room. When it finally died away Mr. Krans was gone. In his place loomed a figure right out of medieval demonology, complete with a pair of needle-sharp horns and a twitching barbed tail. The dark man took one step backward and then sat down again.

"Interesting," he said at last, "but what's the point?"

Little flames seemed to leap into being deep within the demon's glowing, saucer-like eyes.

"Listen, man," he hissed. "Nobody believes in us any more—at least not until it's too late—so all that we got to do is walk around in the shape of a natural man and take what we want when we want it. Back in the old days it wasn't like that. People knew about us and were on guard against us. We really had to work for what little we got—and I mean work! Now we got it made and I'm not about to give up my twenty-hour week and all my easy pickings for nobody."

"My sympathy," murmured the

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dark man, "but I fail to see where all this is leading us."

"Right up to the fact that Bal-Shire looks enough like me to be my twin brother . . . except that he's got three heads. What do you think's going to happen when he's discovered stuck in the main vault of the biggest bank in Chicago come Monday morning?"

The other settled back in his chair and put his feet on the desk. He seemed strangely unmoved by either Krans's transformation or his revelation.

"Couldn't he just dematerialize or something?" he suggested.

"If he could he wouldn't be stuck there now."

"What happened?"

"A deal I've been working on involves a little blackmail so I sent Bal-Shire down to the bank to sneak some papers out of a safety deposit box after the vault was sealed for the weekend. The clumsy idiot wasn't paying any attention to what he was doing when he materialized and he knocked over a bottle of ink with his tail. The crash startled him so that he went straight up in the air. When he came down he landed right in the middle of a disruption pattern and he's been stuck there howling for help ever since. He can't dematerialize as long as he's inside it and there's nothing any of us can do for him. We can't even touch the edge of a field, let alone cross its boundaries." He paused and then growled in a rumbling voice. "That's where you come in. You're supposed to know all about this science stuff. You cook up something that will get my boy out—*or else!*"

"Or else what?" asked the dark man in an interested voice.

A great gout of white flame gushed suddenly from the demon's mouth and played along the edges of the heavy steel door until its edges and those of its massive frame ran together in one solid weld.

"Or else we'll give the police a real locked room mystery. The question as to how you managed to weld yourself into a bare room when you didn't have any equipment, and then tear yourself slowly into small chunks—that's going to give the newspapers a real field day."

The dark man sat quietly for a moment and then said, "You present a rather convincing argument. But if I'm going to be able to do anything for you, you've got to give me something more to go on. What is this disruption field you talk about? How does it work?"

The demon scowled. The whole subject was obviously extremely distasteful to him. "It's not really a field," he growled; "it's just a five-sided geometrical figure, a pentagram. If one of us gets stuck inside we can't change shape and we can't get out. We just freeze—it's something instinctive like the

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way a bird reacts to a snake. Something happened way back when . . . after the battle with the shining ones and the long fall . . . after we changed so much we couldn't fly high enough to get away."

He stared silently at the black shining floor for a moment and then his voice regained its normal gruffness. "We haven't got time to talk about the past. It's the present that's the problem. Are you going to start doing something about it or am I?"

"I could think better if I could relax," said the dark man plaintively. "You don't have to hog the only comfortable chair in the place."

The demon simply grunted, settled back more firmly, and producing a wicked looking dagger from some secret place, began to sharpen the tips of his long claws. There was a moment of hesitation and then the dark man said at last, "If I'm going to change the past without really changing the past, you'll have to give me a little more to go on. Just what were you trying to accomplish by going back and changing a set of construction plans?"

"Well," said the other reluctantly, "they were all ready to be inked in and blueprinted. Chances are that nobody would have noticed that the design for the ornamental inlaid pentagram for the center of the vault floor had had another side added to make it a hexagram. Six-pointed figures don't bother us at all. Bal-Shire could have walked right through it, done his business, and been back to the pits in no time. It was a good idea—"

"—only it didn't work. But maybe I've got hold of something that might. Any break in the lines of a pentagram causes it to lose its power, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, it's an either-or deal."

The dark man nodded thoughtfully and then began to fiddle with the controls of the machine on his desk. Just as the familiar oval formed, Krans jumped to his feet and came roaring across the room, his great bat wings stretched out as if he were trying to take off.

"Oh, no, you don't," he boomed. "Maybe I don't know much about science but I do know something about humans. And my guess is that maybe you just got a bright idea that you could get out of this by going back before I sealed the room up and leaving me here to whistle."

The man in the white coat tried to say something but he didn't get a chance.

"Or maybe," continued the demon, "you're thinking that just because the contract has to be completed within thirty days that all you got to do is hop a couple of years in the future so that the whole agreement will lapse and I won't have a legal leg to stand on?"

"Of course I thought of all that,"

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said the dark man impatiently, "but I wouldn't be fool enough to try to act on either. If I went back I'd obviously try to avoid any agreement with you in the future. And I couldn't do that because my so doing would mean a noticeable difference in the present. And as for the future—do you think I'm stupid enough to think that legal technicalities mean anything to your kind? Even if you can't travel in time you're immortal. No matter where I tried to hide in the future, I'd know that eventually you'd be around looking for me."

Krans scratched his horns reflectively. "That makes sense," he admitted at last and went back to his easy chair and sat down.

The other made a final adjustment on the warper, picked up the bottle of ink on his desk, and popped through the silver oval. A moment later he popped out again. "Little off course," he said and twiddled with the knobs on his machine. When he came back the second time he had a satisfied grin on his face.

"Now you can't say I didn't complete my side of the bargain. Your boy is free. If he's not back at the pits by now it's because he stopped on the way for a couple of quick doubles. And under the circumstances I can't say that I blame him."

The demon looked dazed. "But how? You said that nothing could be done in the past that would cause a noticeable change. How could you change the pentagram in any way that wouldn't be noticeable?"

"There was nothing to it," said the other modestly. "Bal-Shire knocked over a bottle of ink in the ordinary course of events, didn't he, and splashed it all over the floor?"

"Yes, but so what?"

"Nobody was around to notice it, were they?"

The demon shook his head mutely.

"And if I added another splash that cut across the lines of the inlaid pentagram and broke the figure so your boy could get out, there's no reason why it should be noted more than the other splotches, is there? The janitor will clean up the whole mess Monday morning and that will be the end of that."

Krans let out a grunt of relief, tossed his dagger into the air, and then caught it deftly. "And now you expect me to pay off," he said with a leer. "Chum, you already know the answer. I've never kept a bargain yet and I'm not about to start. And the police *are* going to be going around talking to themselves when they find what's left of you inside a locked room." A set of long tusks slid into view and gnashed hungrily as he grabbed hold of the arms of the chair and started to pull himself to his feet.

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The man behind the desk jumped back, as if in fright, grabbed for the two switches set in the wall behind him, and flipped one on and the other off. As the electric lights went out, there was a moment of total darkness before an eerie glow came from the bank of infrared and ultraviolet lights set in the ceiling. The demon let out an angry bellow and crouched to spring—and then as a glowing pentagram leapt into being around the chair, he made one convulsive movement and hurled his dagger just before he found himself locked in straining paralysis.

The shock of the blade that buried itself to the hilt in his back slammed the dark man against the wall. He started to slump and then pulled himself erect and turned so he faced the trapped demon. In spite of a little trickle of blood that welled out of the corner of his mouth when he spoke, his voice gave no indication that anything unusual had happened. If anything, it was a little more pedantic than usual.

"If you had diverted just a little of the time you expended in encouraging human corruption to an examination of human progress, you might have learned that most inks fluoresce under ultraviolet light. When I went back through the time warp the first time I just made a hop of six hours. It only took me a couple of seconds to ink in a pentagram around your chair."

"But the ink," croaked the other. "There wasn't any there before. There would have been a noticeable difference!"

The dark man gave a strangled cough as the trickle of blood suddenly increased to a gush. He dipped one finger in the inkwell and flipped several drops in the direction of the demon. As soon as they hit the floor they became invisible.

"Jet black on a jet black floor?" he gasped. "Why should it be noticeable? You were right though. When the police finally break in here they'll have a real locked room mystery." He reached behind him with unsteady fingers and touched the hilt of the dagger that had ripped into him. "I couldn't have done it myself. Not at that angle. But back to our agreement. I said I'd give you what you wanted most—and I did—and now . . ."

The shining geometrical figure that glowed up from the floor at the paralyzed demon seemed to suck away all his strength, converting his once powerful bulk into a quivering, blubbery mass. He tried twice to speak. When he did his voice skidded out of control into a high falsetto.

"Who are you? What do you want of me?"

"You already know," said the dark man softly, a faint note of compassion in his voice. "If you want to you can remember the time before you were exiled here,

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the time before you made yourself ugly with your own ugliness. If you want to you can remember us. But that would be painful, and even for you there is no need for needless pain—not any longer."

The angel's voice faded to a sibilant whisper as he let his hunting costume fall to the floor and sprawl out like a broken doll.

"And so," he hummed as he resolved himself into the pulsating pentagram of pure energy that was his normal shape, and began to descend over the helpless Krans like a five-sided noose, "now is your time to vanish. But not softly. And not suddenly. And not away."

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